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**Preparatory Working Group meeting:
Engaging Citizens in Disaster Risk Management**

20 October 2020, VTC Interactional Platform



FINAL REPORT

Contents

1. Summary..... 1

2. Introduction and Background..... 3

3. Exchanged ideas and innovative approaches..... 4

 3.1. Session 1. Risk Communication.....4

 3.2. Session 2. Social Activities..... 7

 3.3. Session 3. Social Media.....8

 3.4. Session 4. Volunteers.....9

4. International emergencies..... 9

 4.1. COVID-19.....9

 4.2. Marine pollution..... 11

5. Conclusions..... 12

6. Follow-up and action plan proposed..... 14

Annex I..... 16

Annex II.....19

1. Summary

The UfM towards a new strategy: Engage the citizens as an active agent in DRM

This document serves as basis for discussion at the next meeting of the Working group Engaging citizens in Disaster Risk Management taking place in 2021 and has been developed reflecting participants’ inputs during the meeting and comments received afterwards, in order to propose some follow-up actions. The document contains a summary of the main ideas covered in each session, the most relevant conclusions and some proposals to move working group objectives forward.

Civil protection managers in participating countries recognize that engage citizens in natural and manmade risks is becoming increasingly more important. This is due firstly to the increase in threats that represent risks, which in turn makes better citizens’ knowledge necessary, and, secondly, the growing influence of communications on the population’s attitude, prevention and reaction to emergencies.

Thus, the preparatory conference has served to identify the authorities’ main objectives engaging citizens in disasters risk management, draw some conclusions and arrange the WG’s follow-up actions.

Engaging citizens in disaster risk management objectives:

- Obtain society’s involvement in emergencies to promote a positive change in citizens’ attitudes among different groups (citizens, authorities, volunteers, stakeholders, etc.).
- Increase citizens’ knowledge to favour risk prevention and increase their survival skills in emergencies. Limit the impacts of emergencies.
- Strengthen citizens’ trust and self-confidence in coping with large emergencies and coming to terms with their consequences, which increases their resilience.
- Increase the number and the level of skills of volunteers as well as benefit from them to engage citizens in DRM.

Main conclusions:

- Engaging citizens is key in DRM since they are active actor in Civil Protection and usually the first responders. Therefore, it is important to plan and develop activities designed specifically to aware and prepare the population to prevent and face large emergencies.
- Participant countries have demonstrated their willingness to share knowledge and to work together. Therefore, it is an opportunity to establish a common and interoperable strategy regarding engaging citizens in disaster risk management.
- Risk communications must be considered as an emergency capability. Therefore, these responsibilities must be conducted by specialised personnel and should be carried out in a planned and systematic way.
- Social activities, education, social media and volunteers have an important role to engage the citizens. Therefore, civil protection authorities must lead the actions, especially focused for this channels.
- Some emergencies such as COVID-19 and Mediterranean marine pollution are international and affect several countries at once. Therefore, this kind of emergencies often require a joint and common action to face them also in public communication activities.

Follow-up actions:

- Prepare the agenda for the next WG meeting, including the common challenges, strategies and priority actions at national, sub-regional and regional levels to be implemented in an Action Plan.
- Develop an Action Plan according to initiatives and conclusions obtained during Engaging Citizens in WG preparatory meeting and to proposal received afterwards.
- Identify new initiatives, platforms and discussion forums to share further knowledge and promote joint training between countries.

2. Introduction and background

The actions proposed under this working group will be complementary to the work carried out under three other working groups (i.e. preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro Mediterranean area; ii. Engaging citizens in disaster risk management; iii. Volunteers in civil protection) identified in the recommendations of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM).

Population plays an important role in prevention, preparedness and response to disasters. Citizens can be the first responders when a disaster happens, therefore, it is essential to involve citizens in disaster and risk management. Authorities need to have procedures in place to inform citizens on the risks in their region and how to behave in case of disasters, including the most vulnerable people.

Following the Third meeting of Civil Protection Directors-General of the Member States of the UfM convened in 2019 in Barcelona, the UfM Member States together with DG ECHO have set up two working groups to tackle the importance of volunteers and engaging citizens in DRM as key factors in reinforcing public emergency services. Risk Communication¹ is a crucial tool to involve citizens in building resilient societies.

Although they can be two different subjects, there is a direct relationship between the citizens' involvement in disaster risk management and volunteer work in disasters. Both mutually complement each other. On the one hand, greater citizen involvement help attract a higher number of volunteers, which in turn ensures a larger selection and their better qualification.

On the other hand, volunteers are an intermediate resource between the public administrations and citizens, so that public awareness can be raised through them. Therefore, these two working groups are doing their work jointly.

This WGs preparatory meeting was held online on 19-20 October 2020 to debate about the axis of reflections proposed in the discussion document² and to present some best practices examples in this field.

The UfM aim is to ensure that the information is updated and the covered topics and contents are aligned with the needs and interests of the WGs. As a result, the initial discussion document has been reviewed and renewed to enrich it with case studies and good practices to show first-hand experiences during the preparatory meeting. In this document the conclusions have been analysed, reorganised and related to the subjects handled into different sessions of the preparatory conference.

3. Exchanged ideas and innovative approaches

Engaging Citizens in Disaster Risk Management was tackled from different points of view in the preparatory meeting: Risk Communication, Social Activities, Social Media and Volunteers. The results have been summarised as follows:

3.1. Session 1. Risk communication. Citizens' awareness to engage population in DRM

The first step for involving citizens in the prevention, preparation and response to large-scale emergencies is to increase their knowledge in order to gain greater popular interest and awareness. In this sense risk communication is a specific discipline to manage this knowledge in a bidirectional way between authorities and citizens. These activities must be supported in three fundamental pillars: organisation, plans and resources.

¹ Risk Communication definition : <https://www.who.int/risk-communication/background/en/#:~:text=Risk%20communication%20refers%20to%20the,themselves%20and%20their%20loved%20ones>

² Engaging Citizens in DRM Working Group Discussion document. <https://ufmsecretariat.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Discussion-document-Engaging-Citizens-in-DRM-Final.pdf>

Organisation

The services must be equipped with an exclusive and permanent department that can handle the workload involved, as well as ensuring that their personnel is specialised, as this goes beyond institutional communication.

Referents highlight the importance of considering analysing citizens' information needs, their uncertainties, fears and perceptions in order to put all available information and capacities at the service of citizens' information needs. Monitoring and analysing all communication actions is also important to evaluate their efficacy and readapt messages when necessary.

It is also important coordinating activities with other relevant institutions, civil society actors and partners active in the field – potentially establishing a standing working group for coordination of risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) in emergencies.

The rising of Social Media, makes it necessary to create specialized units within the Civil Protection national systems that specifically serve these objectives as part of the comprehensive strategy.

Strategy / plans

The assignment of exclusive personnel lets specific strategies and plans be developed to achieve these objectives. Having a comprehensive communication strategy is essential for attaining objectives. Those in charge of civil protection and disaster risk reduction must be aware of the importance of communication plans as an effective tool to help decision-makers in the risk communication and to lay down some conditions for generating public trust.

The strategy must start with understanding that the greatest amount of work must be done before the emergency occurs, not only in the communication-planning phase, but also having daily information actions, both to let citizens become familiar with emergencies so they know how to prevent them, as well as identifying the institutions responsible during emergencies.

Resources: communication channels

To reach citizens, the authorities have a series of valid channels including the media, education and social media. They should all be making the most out of it, as part of this comprehensive document and the future action plan.

Mass media has traditionally been the communication channel employed between the authorities and citizens. Due to their characteristics, – TV, radio and printed media – it plays a specific role in emergencies. In fact, this collaboration from mass media is set out in the law itself in many countries to prevent for instance the situation created after the 2019 Albania earthquake, where media published unofficial information creating a

state of panic among the citizens and chaos through the streets, which could have been avoided. (Art. 45. 2019 Albanian Civil Protection Law)³.

In some countries, mass media incorporate programs to deliver important messages for civil protection shared by the authorities in accordance with their laws, without prejudice to their freedom of information.

By their very nature, social activities such as education, social media and volunteers have been treated in a more specific sessions.

Target audience

The target audience for risk communication must include all citizens, professionals in emergency services, volunteers, people with disabilities, vulnerable population, NGOs and stakeholders to play a more active role and to increase their knowledge or risk perception.

For this reason, while some information actions are effective for all targets, the different communication must be specific to ensure that each definite target is effectively reached. A proposal of target audience classification is contained in Annex I in accordance with the ones cited in the different sessions. Technical language needs to be adapted to the audience.

Emotional context

Large emergencies have a significant emotional impact on the population that can affect how the facts are perceived and even their critical thought surrounding the circumstances. In this emotional context, regular communication techniques are no longer effective.

In this regard, there is a widespread consensus about the importance of institutions earning and keeping citizens' trust in order to become valid and credible spokespeople for society. To do so, it is crucial to establish and strengthen communication with citizens before an emergency occurs, in a calmer and more peaceful environment. This will not only ensure that they are better prepared for coping with the emergency, but also increase citizens' trust in the authorities and emergency services.

Citizens' attitudes when faced with great catastrophes are totally related to the perception they have of different risks. This makes it important to understand and know the population's information needs as well as their concerns, perceptions, etc., and classifying them depending on their importance and urgency.

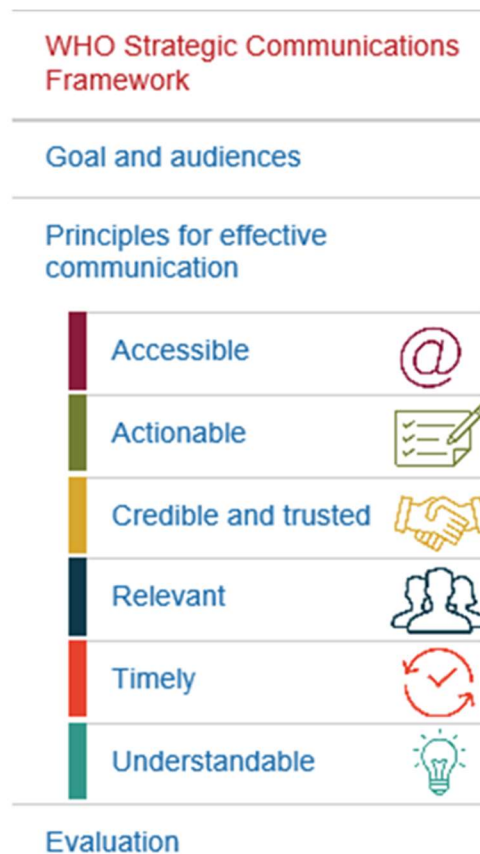
In addition, citizens' greater self-confidence and trust in institutions will in turn reduce the consequences of the emotional context and will strengthen the population's resilience.

³ 2019 Albanian Civil Protection Law

<https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20190724173027ligj%20nr.%2045,%20dt.%2018.7.2019.pdf>

Characteristics of risk communication

Communication has to be adapted to the citizen's needs and emotional situation in uncertain times, such as an emergency. The WG has identified some features for this. There are some communication characteristics that can help those responsible to engage the citizens in DRM in times with turbulent emotions. A summary of communication features is contained Annex II in accordance with those mentioned in the different sessions.



4

3.2. Session 2. Social Activities

Increasing number of forest fires, floods, marine pollution, tsunamis, pandemics, explosions, nuclear incidents, whether natural or man-made catastrophes, makes it necessary to prepare society and to promote social activities, also from the educational systems.

Although this subject is usually the responsibility of other national institutions, the civil protection authorities are in charge of promoting how important it is to reflect on this new reality within the education system, even at higher levels. The need to include citizen education in risk prevention is undeniable and the results are clear and very effective, as we have seen in this preparatory conference.

⁴ Communications function at WHO <https://www.who.int/communicating-for-health/functions/emergency-communications/en/>

Education

These educational systems tend to be interdisciplinary and cross-sector, with contribution at different levels (national, regional, local), which can necessitate the involvement of many institutions, as well as the implementation of legislative changes to approve this subject's inclusion in syllabuses.

The education activities must start at school, from the earliest ages. Many referents spotlighting the efficacy of these activities as part of their risk communication plans. Anyone could be the first responders in an emergency, making it important for them to be prepared; to engage young people in these activities is important to design attractive tools such as simulators and role plays. Referents' experience reveal the great interest and willingness of the young students in disaster risk management subjects.

In some countries activities with schools can go beyond exercises and talks, by holding competitions or playing games in which students can increase their knowledge in the most interactive ways, with creative initiatives that promote the concept of preventive awareness, like games with ladders and hoses, a children's safety guide, firefighter magazines and other brochures. The KnowRisk⁵ project, funded by the European Union, suggests using different board games. It is also important to do it at all educational levels, including the promotion of Master's degrees in emergencies management to recruit young people with high training in the Civil Protection National Systems. Information activities in higher education stages can provide more specialised citizen involvement and fosters the spontaneous design of engineering projects and the development of specific technologies for detection, prevention, protection and communication during emergencies for instance.

The KnowRisk project also proposes educational initiatives outside the schools. There are examples to facilitate local communities' access to expert knowledge on non-structural seismic risk protection solutions. These recommendations let citizens carry out simple actions to reduce the risk of damages if there are seismic waves.

Exercises

Emergency services preparedness exercises offer authorities an opportunity to invite citizen participation. This participation of citizens, either as extras or as active participants, not only allows sharing with them the knowledge of the experts but also putting into practice the coordination of a complex device in which the involvement of non-habitual actors in the management of emergencies. This participation not only allows the population to have direct and intense contact that supports learning and involvement in emergencies but go beyond this since it also encourages the reflection of citizens, both in the prevention and reaction to accidents.

⁵ EU Project KnowRisk <https://knowriskproject.com/>

3.3. Session 3. Social Media

Due to their characteristics, social media have become an extremely useful channel for institutions. Their importance is so great that there are already many countries that have a specialised department for the use of these technologies within its civil protection structures.

The recent explosion in Beirut highlighted the value and importance of these new technologies. The Lebanese authorities' fast reaction allowed them to activate mechanisms for informing citizens, especially in the first hours. Despite the lack of information in these initial hours, social media published a series of general precautions to prevent greater damages due to people's contact with remains and destruction from the explosion and preventing COVID-19 infections during operations.

Like in other large-scale emergencies like earthquakes and floods, the electrical grid was quite damaged, which in turn also affected telecommunications. In this regard, social media displayed their survival skills in these cases, which can make them the only sure-fire communication channel to reach citizens at the very beginning.

CBRN emergency communication is particularly sensitive, given the greater complexity of informing citizens of these risks and the worries and unrest created by lack of knowledge. The importance of the effective use of social media in these cases was revealed after the accident in Fukushima. Since then, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has spearheaded an international programme to strengthen citizens' knowledge of this subject, including how to use social media effectively for public communication in the nuclear field using plain language, as a part of the Nuclear Communicator's Toolbox (NCT).⁶

In this sense, the IAEA supports Member States at the national, regional and interregional levels in the areas of citizen's involvement in nuclear field, and communication with the public in a nuclear or radiological emergency. Activities include social media simulator training, webinars and tailored support upon request.⁷

3.4. Session 4. Volunteers and Citizens in DRM

The action of volunteering can also have an impact on risk communication. In fact, as the conference revealed, engaging citizens demands enormous work and the involvement of many diverse groups. In this sense, the commitment and knowledge of the volunteers make them a key element to achieve some objectives of risk communication.

The rise of social networks is also highlighting the importance of digital volunteer in monitoring, verification, recapitulation and the fight against false information⁸ on these

⁶ IAEA Communication Toolbox <https://www.iaea.org/resources/nuclear-communicators-toolbox>

⁷ IAEA Communication in nuclear emergencies training course <https://www.iaea.org/services/education-and-training/training-courses/epr/communication-with-the-public-in-a-nuclear-or-radiological-emergency>

⁸ VOST Portugal Twitter against Fake News <https://twitter.com/VOSTPT/status/1240751807854501888>

channels. The Virtual Operation Support Team (VOST)⁹, an EU funded project, is a group addressed those that are more novel like Telegram or TikTok and Instagram.

These digital volunteers work together with official entities sharing coordinate messaging and provide information that can be used by emergency services. The PPRD South III regional programme carries out workshops related to population awareness increase and to volunteering, including how to coordinate with officials, spokespeople preparedness and digital tools.

The benefit of volunteering retention is a topic that has already been covered in the WG on volunteers due to its importance as it draws on the experience of older volunteers. In this sense, informative actions aimed at volunteering must have, on the one hand, the objective of reinforcing the commitment and knowledge of this group and, on the other hand, familiarize citizens with their work.

4. International emergencies

Among several emergencies, there are two ongoing large emergencies that require a joint and common action to face them since they do not have frontiers: COVID19 and Mediterranean marine pollution.

The proximity and close relationship between our countries make mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences necessary and urgent. The promotion of joint cross-border activities coordinated specially between neighbouring countries is necessary and urgent, too.

4.1. COVID-19

It is a fact that the recent pandemic is also a global health emergency that needs a citizen's acceptance guidance, some very strict measures and achieve a behavioural change to control the transmission of the virus. That's why communication must be considered as a part of the intervention on health emergencies.

WHO has a great experience in risk communication during health emergencies and has a model based on the authorities' trust, knowledge of citizens risk perception and particular communication plans. These plans are based on transparency, coordinating efforts, selecting the most useful channels and listening to adjust activities as needed.

Messaging is produced in accordance with risk communication guidelines, actionable and connecting with citizens in this particular context. Commented usefulness of infographic to offer clear information to citizens in emergencies in this sense, people have developed a series of graphics available in more than 40 languages that could be useful to reinforce preventive messages also in the Euro-Mediterranean countries¹⁰.

⁹ VOST EUROPE <https://www.vosteurope.eu/>

¹⁰ WHO infographic coronavirus measures in different languages:

<https://who.canto.global/v/coronavirus/folder/PQC9D?from=thumbnail&scrollTo=100&gOrderProp=name&gSortingForward=true&display=thumbnail&viewIndex=1>

In this sense, COVID-19 is a recent unprecedented situation that is causing fatigue among the population, because of the duration and the discomforts for the citizens. To prevent demotivation, WHO has developed four strategies on information use, five principles to protective behaviours and one action to improve risk perception.¹¹

Risk communication is a two-way dialogue between the authorities and at-risk people. This exchange aspect, involving receiving/listening as much as sending/sharing information, needs to be reflected in each step of the process.

The role of young people is being very important during this phase of the pandemic, as they seem to be getting tired of the social distancing measures taken to fight Covid. Unlike in the first wave, more young people have fallen ill in the following waves of the pandemic.

That is the reason behind the awareness campaigns launched by the WHO and the Red Cross to reach the younger audience; this campaigns have been specially very effective on social networks. The Spanish Red Cross, for instance, has collaborated closely in carrying out contagion prevention campaigns with the Spanish General Directorate of Civil Protection. Following the criteria of designing communication actions based on a specific audience, different campaigns have been carried out, each one aimed at different audiences: actions targeting young people, with the purpose of making them aware, and the elderly, aimed to raise awareness and inform them about the protection measures and in addition to that offer them any help they might need considering their greater risk and the limitations imposed by confinement.

Through these campaigns, more than 2,600,000 were reached, with the support of 600 volunteers, some of them recruited during the campaigns. This shows that these informative actions not only raise social awareness but also the recruitment of volunteers. As an example, VOST, in connection with official entities, produced COVID-19 related content between March 2020 and December 2020 that was seen more than 36 million times on Twitter.¹²

Despite experts conclude that much remains unknown about COVID-19, it is important to share knowledge available and lessons learned from this pandemic in health emergency plans to manage the crisis.

¹¹ Pandemic Fatigue <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/publications-and-technical-guidance/2020/pandemic-fatigue-reinvigorating-the-public-to-prevent-covid-19,-september-2020-produced-by-who-europe>

¹² VOST Portugal Twitter <https://twitter.com/VOSTPT/status/1325943893955928065?s=20>

4.1. Marine Pollution

Maritime pollution is becoming more evident every day and its consequences already affect severely the well-being and safety of citizens, causing various diseases among them; that is why it should be considered a great emergency; in fact, the Mediterranean is one of the regions most affected by international pollution. The influence that humans have on this pollution is also a fact, so it is essential to educate society about the seriousness of the matter and the role that we all fear in the prevention and reduction of maritime pollution.

This is the objective of engaging citizens in marine pollution whose differentiated audience is both authorities and companies, professionals, marinas, users of pleasure boats and the general public.

In this sense, in the framework of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean (Barcelona Convention), the IMO administered Regional Marine Pollution Emergency Response Centre for the Mediterranean Sea (REMPEC) is developing the “Mediterranean Strategy (2022-2031)” for the prevention of, and response to marine pollution from ships whose action plan has in public awareness one of its main allies to disseminate relevant studies and promote good behaviours:

- Supporting increased media exposure of relevant activities
- Promotion and dissemination of relevant studies
- Organisation of activities to increase public engagement.

NGO initiatives can also support authorities to engage citizens in Marine Pollution. Through campaign #potavristou, AKTH projects (Cyprus)¹³ motivate people to act, either organised or individually, to reach out and collect any surrounding litter, such as plastic bottles, cigarette butts.

A social media campaign to call on citizen’s co-responsibility with a good result. More than 2000 volunteers took part in this initiative in 187 different locations in Cyprus and 20 abroad. As a result, 12 tons of litter were removed from the beaches.

¹³AKTH Projects : <http://www.akti.org.cy/our-projects/>

5. Most Relevant Conclusion	
GENERAL	The importance of the engaging citizens in DRM. It is important to raise the citizens' awareness and turn them into an active agent, not just a victim; authorities must trust the citizens .
	Trust the citizens. It is a mutual process ; high-level authorities should trust the citizens since during crisis, both sides are responding. This way the citizens will be faster and highly motivated.
	Develop a comprehensive and specific plan , to have permanent structures , and to use all available means : Mass Media, Social Activities, Social Media and Volunteers.
	The proximity and close relationship between UfM countries make both the mutual exchange of knowledge and experiences in this field necessary, as well as the promotion of joint cross-border activities .
	Develop guidelines to allow a better understanding of the communication strategy (strategic orientations, etc.), including a set of recommendations to be implemented in partners countries.
	Work together to establish a common strategy and to be interoperable in this field.
RISK COMMUNICATION	Risk Communication skills are very useful, nonetheless they must be conducted in a systematic way and require careful planning and inter-institutional/regional/national and international coordination. That is the reason why it is important to count on specialised personnel , not only in public communication but also in risk communication.
	These professionals must identify the best communication strategies to engage and prepare citizens to understand, prevent and respond to emergencies keeping in mind that well-informed population has a greater chance to survive in the face of a disaster. Different channels for different audiences , keeping in mind to be accessible to people with disabilities.
	Traditional mass media are allies to keep citizens informed during emergencies and to engage citizens in DRM. Therefore, institutions have to support their work, collaborate and teach journalists if needed to promote their social responsibilities.
EDUCATION	Civil Protection and disaster risk management authorities are responsible to prepare society and to face the different risks including in the educational system. Starting from the early stage is quite effective due to younger students learning capacities and commitment. Information activities in higher education stages can provide more specialised citizen involvement and promote technological development to prevent and reduce consequences of the catastrophes.
	Joint exercises with emergency services and the population promote community engagement. Emergency services exercises are an opportunity to the citizens to have direct and intense contact that supports learning. These exercises go beyond this since they built trust and reinforce relations between emergency services and citizens.
	Preparing society for emergencies integrated into education systems strengthen citizens' trust and self-confidence in coping with large emergencies and coming to terms with their consequences, which increases their resilience . This will reinforce the citizen's positive and cooperative behaviour and solidarity .

SOCIAL MEDIA	Due to the great influence that social media has on our society and civil protection, institutions should aspire to have the most important influence regarding emergencies matters. By using social media, institutions may position themselves as a trusted source of information and lead communication during an emergency.
	Social networks are a fast, easy and inexpensive channels to know the perception of citizens about what is happening and evaluate if our messages are reaching them in the appropriate way.
	Social Media are the most effective channel to reach young people and in large emergencies, they could be the only sure-fire communication channel to keep citizens informed at the very beginning.
VOLUNTEERS	The more citizens engaged in DRM, the more volunteers we can recruit; the more volunteers we can recruit the better-prepared volunteers we can select.
	Volunteers can help to increase the engagement of citizens since they can be a valid interlocutor to carry out risk communication activities. In addition to this, the involvement of volunteers to engage citizens' activities can help to familiarize the population about the role of volunteer in the disaster risk management.
	Volunteers can also help authorities to manage emergency communication issues such as face fake news or look information online that can help emergency services.
INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCIES	Large emergencies often require a joint and common action to face them also in public communication. Covid-19 and Mediterranean marine pollution are two such on-going emergencies.
	Covid-19 is a global health emergency that requires joint and common communication action. During the pandemic some international organisations and countries have developed their own strategies and initiatives. Some of these products or activities could be shared between UfM countries to profit teamwork . International and cross-border initiatives are more reliable and effective to engage citizens.
	Marine pollution in the Mediterranean area. With REMPEC Mediterranean Strategy as the most important initiative to face it and public communication as a key tool. Countries have an important role to support REMPEC in disseminating relevant studies and promoting the correct behaviours. NGO initiatives are also a useful resource to reach the citizens and raise their awareness.

To focus on the efforts and objectives of this working group and plan future joint actions, the next main goal is to develop an Action Plan that is discussed and approved during plenary meeting.

6. Follow up actions proposed for an Action Plan

The objective of the UfM for the plenary conference is to focus on different proposals that can favour joint activities among its member countries. These proposals include: the organisation of training activities, take advantage of the UfM framework as a forum for continue to share experiences or encourage cross border initiatives.

To that end, plenary conference topics will focus to develop an action plan including national, sub-regional, and regional, cross-border or international activities, joint initiatives and recommendations:

- Identify common challenges, strategies and priority actions at national, sub-regional and regional levels to be implemented to include in the Action Plan.
- Organisation/Country supporting the implementation of the actions.
- Complementarity of existing initiatives and international support.

	Proposal of actions/activities to be implemented	Organisation Supporting	Complementarity of existing initiatives
1	Identify platforms and discussion forums to share knowledge to engage citizens and promote joint training between countries. Study training facilities and means available to promote it.	UfM, DG ECHO, Civil Protection National Agencies, IAEA, IFRC	International forums already existing for other emergency capabilities, exercises, etc.
2	Foster mutual support in Communication activities and of the standardizing procedures among UfM partners to be interoperable.	Risk Communication National experts	ISO 22300, 22395, 22322. US NFPA-1561, 1201, 1616 WHO guidance.
3	Promote specific engagement among citizens in DRM workshops including other sectors of society such as science, education, journalists, social media experts, psychologists, sociologists, volunteers, NGO, strategic companies, etc.	UfM, EUCPM, PPRD programmes, IAEA, IFRC.	PPRD programmes regarding volunteer, women and citizens awareness.
4	Consider joint communication activities to prevent and fight against Covid-19 and as well as other potential international emergencies and Risks. That also includes procedures to	WHO, IFRC, UfM partners countries	UNDRR, EU, WHO, Regional programmes,

	request cross-border or regional support in Risk Communication campaigns.		
5	Draft a brief guide regarding Engaging Citizens in DRM to UfM partners. (Principles, guidelines, coordination, communications capabilities, recommendations, etc.) Crisis and Emergency Risk Communication Plans	Engaging Citizens in DRM Working Group	IAEA Road Map for Crisis Communication, US Homeland Security National Emergency Communications Plan.
6	Identify and promote activities and tools to facilitate access to information regarding Civil Protection to citizens with different disabilities.	Civil Protection National Agencies, specialized organisations.	National workshops, seminars, style guide about disabilities for communicators.
7	Study the development of a common educational program for possible linkages with the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network.	UfM, E.U. National educational authorities, National Health (for biological)	Education for Sustainable Consumption, Behaviour and Lifestyles UfM publication, DG ECHO Education in Emergencies (EiE).
8	Identify further initiatives, specially together with the “Volunteers” WG and “Preparing for efficient mutual assistance in the Euro Mediterranean area” WG.	Volunteers WG, Mutual assistant WG	“Volunteers” WG and “Preparing for efficient mutual assistance WG.
9	Creating a data base regarding Engaging Citizens and risk communication specialist available in UfM countries.	UfM, EUCPM, UfM partners countries	UfM publications and key documents database.
10	Enhance capabilities and problem-solving skills of government officials by studying and using innovative methods that seek to resolve citizens needs and expectations on DRM	UfM, DG ECHO, Civil Protection National Agencies, IAEA, IFRC, WHO	IAEA Social Media Training programs, ITU “Artificial Intelligence in Natural Disaster Management” ¹⁴ , Nesta Designing for Public Services ¹⁵
11	Promote marine pollution campaigns at national and regional level to aware society about the seriousness of the matter and the role that citizens fear in the prevention and reduction of maritime pollution.	UfM, DG ECHO, REMPEC	Workshop on Response to Spill Incidents involving Hazardous (MEDEXPOL), NGO initiatives.

¹⁴ <https://www.itu.int/md/T17-SG05-210511-TD-GEN-1658>

¹⁵ <https://www.nesta.org.uk/toolkit/designing-for-public-services-a-practical-guide/>

Annex table of content

1. Annex I: Target Audience
2. Annex II: Risk communication features

Annex I

Target Audience

General population

This is the largest sector in society and the reason why the techniques and characteristics of information campaigns are primarily designed for them. However, communication has to be adapted to the citizens' needs and emotional situation in times of uncertainty, such as an emergency, to be effective. On the one hand, this group is not homogeneous, as there are subgroups and individuals with different characteristics related to the social, cultural and religious settings that must be considered when designing information campaigns.

On the other hand, the emotional milieu in a large emergency conditions people's perceptions and reasoning, so that we must take advantage of peacetime periods to initiate the dialogue with citizens by using communications, regular communication techniques and, when an emergency occurs, adapt these techniques to the specific context.

People with special vulnerability

In emergencies there are vulnerabilities such as, poverty, health conditions (aging, and pre-existing diseases) and discrimination behaviours that make specific groups more vulnerable and in need for more care and protection.

These vulnerabilities require specific attention from the authorities and dedicated actions to address these groups and, in most cases, these actions must be accompanied by information campaigns that specifically address these groups. Covid-19 has revealed the need to plan specific communication actions to reach these groups.

People with different disabilities

These groups must be distinguished from people with special vulnerabilities, given that in many cases their disabilities only require communication actions to be adapted to facilitate their access to the same information received by all other citizens from the authorities.

Communication plans addressed to people with disabilities requires a comprehensive accessibility and universal design incorporated to make sure the message is fully accessible for all in accordance with Universal design principles. In this regard, technological advances provide tools and applications that can be extremely useful for assisting institutions with this task.

In this sense European Commission implementing a standardisation request to the European standardisation organisations in support of Directive (EU) 2016/2102 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the accessibility of the websites and mobile applications of public sector bodies¹⁶

'Accessibility' is defined as meaning that people with disabilities have access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, transportation, information and communications technologies and systems (ICT), and other facilities and services.¹⁷

For instance, Spanish Emergency Military Unit (UME) includes among its priorities the training of its members in care for people with disabilities in emergencies, a task that has been complemented with the organisation of rescue drills in close contact with different people with disabilities associations, including information accessibility as ordered in the Spanish laws (Art 7 bis.7. c.)

There are several initiatives already in place related to communications with people with different disabilities in emergencies. Further, we should not forget that a large emergency itself causes damages to many people, which could even produce or heighten a disability.

Children and Youth

Children and youth feature the right to participate, motivation and the learning capacity that favours the objectives of risk communication.

Schools, family, non-educational actors (e.g., cultural institutions, community youth councils) and social relationships are contexts which need to be considered to reach them and engage with them. Tailored initiatives designed with them regarding disaster risk reduction is an opportunity to build more resilient communities.

For example, *CUIDAR* Project¹⁸¹⁹ recommends policymakers and practitioners to:

- (i) Acknowledge the right of children to be included in disaster management, not just seen as passive receivers of messages. This includes working with this audience needs and competences.
- (ii) The need to work with them at different levels (local, regional and national).
- (iii) The need to co-create the Disaster Risk Management Plans with them.
- (iv) The need to promote dedicated risk education and communication strategies taking into consideration their different cultural backgrounds.

¹⁶ EU standardisation mandates: <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/mandates/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.detail&id=577#>

¹⁷ European Disability Strategy 2010-2020 : <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2010:0636:FIN:en:PDF>

¹⁸ <https://www.lancaster.ac.uk/cuidar/pt/>

¹⁹ <https://policy.bristoluniversitypress.co.uk/children-and-young-peoples-participation-in-disaster-risk-reduction>

For youth, their influence is largely determined by their social relationships and new technologies, making social media a very effective channel to reach them, using their language while ensuring that institutions do not lose any institutional coherence.²⁰

Volunteers and NGOs

The importance both of volunteers and NGOs in prevention is a clear fact, so that authorities should design specific campaigns to maximise their recruitment and engagement. This will not only ensure that there are higher numbers of people available but will also allow for the very best to be selected from among the profiles, in accordance with their preparation.

Further, although volunteers and specific NGOs may become part of civil protection systems, we should not forget their importance as part of the general public and the opportunity that risk communication represents to strengthen their knowledge, foster their social recognition and favour real-time coordination.

Indeed, the difficulty of coordinating such an extensive and complex device – such as that which could be required in large emergencies – means that early warning and the preparedness of these groups is based on external communication from the authorities.

Stakeholders

There are many institutions, organisations, companies, associations and so forth, which – without being direct members of national civil protection systems – can be extremely useful in resolving large emergencies. Although it is impossible to predict what the concrete contributions would be of each of these organisations and some would even be unimaginable, it is important to identify which of them could assist with useful solutions in emergencies.

This task must be done at all levels – international, regional and local – depending on their proximity and scope of influence. To give just a couple examples, the fields of science, education and business can provide useful engineering solutions to prevent and cope with emergencies. In some cases, these solutions do not come from an institutional proposal, but instead from an initiative from these groups, which are best aware of what science could provide in resolving emergencies. Therefore, specific campaigns must also be created to involve these groups in emergency situations.

²⁰ https://www.undrr.org/sites/default/files/inline-files/UNDRR_Youth_2020_04_20.pdf

Annex II

Risk communication features

In times with turbulent emotions, some specific characteristics of communication must be born in mind to be more effective and not erode sensibilities further.

Large emergencies require **immediate reaction**, also in terms of communication, to reduce citizens' uncertainty to the greatest degree possible. While true that there is a lack of information and chaos often reigns at the very beginning, we must also avoid communicating too hastily. However, it is important to communicate information that may be of interest to citizens as soon as possible – even if it is very little – as information vacuums tend to be filled with fake news. This also positions the responsible authorities as a valid source of information with citizens from the very outset.

During the conference, some referents cited the importance numerous times of keeping the population's trust and confidence in the authorities, in order to ensure that citizens have a positive outlook. In this regard, **transparency** is a fundamental ally, and information must be precise, coherent, and validated by authorised sources.

Information and data must be **understandable** to all citizens, using user-friendly formats and translating information into common or local languages when necessary. Then, information that is useful to citizens must be available on a variety of distribution channels.

The information must be **precise** to prevent citizens from misinterpreting it. For example, the use of the word 'victims' to refer to everyone who is influenced by the consequences of an emergency, to either a greater or lesser degree, could unnecessarily 'victimise' a larger part of the population. Regarding Covid-19, Professor Isaac Ashkenazi pointed out the importance of avoiding the expression 'social isolation' to refer to preventive confinement to avoid infections. He explained why is better to say 'physical isolation' as a strategy to cope with victimhood during the present pandemic.

Information must be **relevant** to citizens and motivated by operational needs to support the population and making decisions. To this end, public information contents and priorities should be updated during different phases of the crisis.

Communication and information dissemination tasks should be framed within a **suitable timeline**. Public communication managers should be fully aware of the population's information needs at all times, including no emergencies times, and the device's capacities and resources to emit useful information at the right time and prevent offering superfluous or outdated information.