



Are managers' and the general public's perceptions of risk communication needs in line? A French alpine valley case study

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Risk communication is a crucial element of risk management. It contributes to social capacity building by influencing the knowledge, attitude, behavior, psychology, as well as social and organizational aspects^{1,2}. It is globally recognized that effective risk communication should address needs and requirements of targeted audiences, especially those of the public.

This study compares needs and requirements related to risk communication as seen by the risk managers, with the needs and requirements as expressed by the general public. Two surveys were conducted in a mountainous region facing multi-hazards, the Ubaye valley (France). The first survey, conducted within the context of the Marie Curie Research and Training Network 'Mountain Risk', was addressed to the local community. It aimed at gathering perceptions, needs and requirements of the general public (344 respondents) on risk communication³. The second survey, conducted in the context of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network 'CHANGES', targeted risk managers (16 stakeholders of the authorities, technical services and emergency units) at both the local and the regional scale to evaluate their perceptions regarding risk communication with the general public. The needs and requirements were analyzed with respect to several dimensions: 1) the information provided to the public, 2) the legal requirements for communication, 3) the level of trust the population has in risk managers, 4) insights on awareness and preparedness, and 5) information on the media used in past communication efforts.

Results of the analysis concerning the last dimension reveal that, while the general public mentioned press, official reports and technical reports as the top three media by which they received information, the risk managers cited the press but in contrast also selected radio and television. Other results indicate that a potential mismatch exists as more than 80% of the respondents of the population find all listed topics (from the description of the natural phenomena to information on the risk management options) as important or very important. Risk managers, however, believe that there is a low desire (18% to 40%) to receive more information on these topics.

¹Höppner, C., Buchecker, M., & Bründl, M. 2010. Risk communication and Natural Hazards. In: C.-N. Consortium (Ed.) *CapHaz-Net - Social Capacity Building for Natural Hazards - Toward More Resilient Societies*, vol CapHaz-Net WP5 report, Birmensdorf, Switzerland, p. 169.

²International Risk Governance Council (IRGC). 2006. Risk Governance: Towards an Integrative Approach. White Paper No.1 Geneva, Switzerland.

³Angignard, M. 2011. Applying risk governance principles to natural hazards and risks in mountains. (Doctoral Thesis). Dortmund University of Technology. Available via: <https://eldorado.tu-dortmund.de/handle/2003/29178>