

EGU23-2951, updated on 01 Dec 2023
<https://doi.org/10.5194/egusphere-egu23-2951>
EGU General Assembly 2023
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Communication for emergencies – the need for a new and inclusive ecosystem

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“The future of emergency communication requires a new ecosystem that enhances capacity and capability by creating an environment that is accessible, equitable, and anticipates change as a constant state.”

This is the key finding of research designed to identify policy recommendations for the EU and which is intended to be of assistance to policymakers at national, regional, and local levels.

It recognises that current models of communication in relation to emergencies are typically oriented towards top-down or single-direction communication, flowing from professionals to lay persons. The impact of this legacy approach extends far beyond the obvious and visible delivery mechanisms. It also frames the underpinning research, discussions, and attitudes. As such, it perpetuates existing limitations and biases of the system, for example, an underappreciation of the needs, role, and contribution of citizens and communities.

It also means that global aspirations- such as enhancing resilience and integration- can at best only ever be partially achieved because they are only seen through a narrow and restrictive lens. This has profound implications and fundamental changes are required to better accommodate multi-directional communication in which the role of authorities and professionals adapts to one of enablement, rather than control.

The primary and overarching recommendation for a new communications ecosystem emerged through considering the wider meaning of specific findings from the research. These are shown below:

- Bridge the communication gaps between professionals and citizens. For example in relation to language (terminology), content, risk tolerance, stereotypes, desired outcomes/priorities, and assumptions.
- Recognise that communication is a continuous activity that is reliant on creating the right conditions for it to be effective.
- Design consistent messaging and communication that is inclusive and adaptable to specific needs.
- Recognise communication as a learning opportunity and actively design in opportunities to

exploit this throughout the cycle.

- Communication strategies should recognise and positively support the opportunities that emergencies provide for citizens, communities, and formal agencies to enhance integration and resilience.

In proposing this paper to the EGU General Assembly 2023, we hope it may represent a valuable opportunity to consider opportunities to align the work of the climate and crisis sectors in this area. Hopefully, in doing so, we will learn from each other and make the task of those using our work easier and more effective.

Note: The authors were funded by the ENGAGE project to produce the report referenced in this abstract. ENGAGE is an EU-funded project, which started in July 2020 and whose mission is to identify novel knowledge, impactful solutions, and emergency response guidelines for exploiting Europe's societal resilience.