

International Crisis Management Conference

“Crisis communication: How to reach stakeholders?”

1-3 October, 2024

Liepāja, Latvia

Summary and action plan of workshop and table top exercise of conference participants

In October 1st – 3rd, 2024 in the Liepāja (Latvia) concert hall “Great Amber” took place 2nd International Crisis Management Conference that was organized within the EU funded project “Resilient Cities”. The topic of the conference was “Crisis communication: How to reach stakeholders?”. At the conference attended 76 participants from 11 countries, that work in the field of public safety. During the conference participants were involved in two activities – workshop and table top exercise.

In the workshop part the participants had to create a portrait of specific target audience / stakeholder, that was provided for them and describe the stakeholders specific points that may be helpful to know during the crisis. Meanwhile during the Table top exercise, the participants were given a scenario and they had to describe what the main message and used channels would be before and during the crisis. Two additional inputs were provided where the participants had to possibly change their main message and channels used. The scenario was following:

We live in a city that is placed next to the second biggest river in whole country. River is wide, but the city is small with about 40 000 inhabitants. Suddenly The State Meteorological Center informs that heavy rain will start soon.

After the descriptions of main message and channels used to inform their stakeholder were presented by the participants, an additional input was provided where they had to provide the answers in limited time:

The State Meteorological Center warn that the heavy rain could last 3-4 days and might overflow the river!

Afterwards a second input was provided for the participants to answer in limited time:

Power outages occur and city is left without electricity and telecommunications!

Afterwards a summary was organized to understand how the communication message and channels change during the various crisis stages.

Project “Resilient cities” is funded by the European Commission’s CERV programme. During the project four International Crisis Management Conferences will take place during 2024 and 2025 – Vienna, Liepāja, Ljubljana, Rostock. For more information please visit the official homepage of the project - <https://resilient-cities.eu/>

ACTION PLAN

The overall outcome of the International Crisis Management Conference “Crisis communication: How to reach stakeholders?” was that for the successful communication before, during and after the crisis is important and the organizations who are responsible for the crisis communication need to know their target audiences. It is crucial not only to know about them, but know specific details. Because of that various tools can be used. One of them was used in the Conference Workshop, where the organizers provided a tool of creating the portrait of the target audience / stakeholder where it is needed to describe the average member of the target audience. In this workshop five descriptive details were provided for describing the target audience:

- Age – helps to create the understanding of the target audience,
- Skills – helps to understand what they may need during crisis and how they may be utilized for solving the crisis,
- What are the main responsibilities in daily life? – helps to understand their daily lives and where they may be found during the days,
- Where do they get information for their daily activities? – helps to understand how they could be reached,
- What are their potential actions in different crisis situations? – helps to understand what could be their mindset during crisis and what help would they need from authorities.

These descriptive points of the target audience may be changed, updated and/or broaden based of the needs of specific organization. But knowing these descriptive points of the audience helps to understand them and the ways to reach them. In the workshop participants had to describe various target groups, i.e. municipal employees, elderly citizens without family support, refugees, etc. There may be the case that one general target audience could be split in smaller, more specific target audiences.

Afterwards, based on the target audience descriptions the Table top exercise provided the opportunity to understand how the knowledge of the audience could be helpful in reaching them before and during the crisis. During the Table top exercise the participants had different outcomes when it came to creating a main message and using the channels in reaching the target audiences. The outcomes varied because of the specific knowledge of the specific target audiences. The main outcome of the Table top exercise was that you need to know your target audiences to know what to message them and how to (via which channels) inform them.

There are no secret guidelines that would work for everyone, that is the job of the institutions / authorities to know their specific target audiences that are different through the cities, regions and countries. Knowing almost all of your target audiences it will be easier for the authorities to select the most vulnerable ones which may need the help earlier than other target audiences.

STAY CALM! STAY INFORMED! STAY SAFE!

PORTRAITS OF TARGET AUDIENCES / STAKEHOLDERS

Portrait of	Municipal Employees
<i>Age</i>	~ 40
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Answering phone calls - Organizational skills - E-mailing - Working with databases - Knowledge of municipal structures, local policies, local lifestyle, infrastructure, local habits - Good communication skills, social, “open”, representative, respectful
<i>What are the main responsibilities in daily life?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Communication with local people, governmental and other authorities - Problem solving - Budget dealing
<i>Where do they get information for their daily activities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Legislation – law, policies, system regulations - Official mass media – internet - Other institutions (government, etc.) - Communication with public
<i>What are their potential actions in different crisis situations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Management - Communication - Depends on the position - Problem solving - Creating / adapting new rules - Fast thinking / fast decision making - Being reactive - Being online and available - Giving commands - Keeping calm
How to reach	Municipal Employees
	Before crisis
<i>Main message</i>	Stick to the civil protection plan, no panic
<i>Channels</i>	Official. Rescue service announcements (e-mail, message (phone), real life calls, radio, meeting)
	In crisis situation
<i>Main message</i>	Put in the action civil protection plan. Do what is expected based on your position (feedback on what is done, what is needed). To confirm official information in public communication with locals. Encourage them to follow the instructions
<i>Channels</i>	Phone calls, in person.
	Input 1
<i>Main message and channels</i>	To be ready for possible dangers in closest 4 days (online, 24 hours, 4 days). Communicate with rescue services, closest cities
	Input 2
<i>Main message and channels</i>	The plan is activated, use generators. Information provided via megaphone, loudspeakers and radio.

Portrait of Elderly citizens without family support

<i>Age</i>	~70+
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge and experience because of their age - Driving license - Limited or no computer / digital literacy - Skills from former work experience
<i>What are the main responsibilities in daily life?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cooking - Shopping - Cleaning house - Gardening - Taking care of a pet - Visiting doctor - Pharmacy
<i>Where do they get information for their daily activities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TV, Radio - Newspaper - Neighbours, friends - Medical personnel - Activity club
<i>What are their potential actions in different crisis situations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support / help to neighbours - Provide local information - Can offer space in their house - Food to survive in crisis - Stay at home

How to reach Elderly citizens without family support

	Before crisis
<i>Main message</i>	Flood may be coming, prepare your home, don't stay on low levels (buildings). Prepare to have enough energy / electricity, food, water (also for animals / pets). Charge the cell phone. Prepare for evacuation, You can get more information on TV, radio, hotline with instructions. Trust information only from national / local sources.
<i>Channels</i>	TV, radio, cell broadcast, helpline to call, maybe social media
	In crisis situation
<i>Main message</i>	For people located on a lower level next to the river – switch off the electricity, take your backpack and leave to a specific point. If you need a transportation – go to another meeting point. For more help call helpline. Stay informed via cell phone and battery operated radio
<i>Channels</i>	Radio, helpline, sirens, megaphone
	Input 1
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Nothing changes
	Input 2
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Nothing changes

Portrait of Families with young children

<i>Age</i>	Wide range of age - Focus on kids 3 to 7 years of age
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read signs, navigate their surroundings and move around - Use of public transport - Use of smartphone - Understand dangers - Follow instructions - Knowing responsibilities
<i>What are the main responsibilities in daily life?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn - Knowing when it is time to act - Follow instructions
<i>Where do they get information for their daily activities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Parents, family - Schools, kindergartens - Friends - Social media
<i>What are their potential actions in different crisis situations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize danger - Who to inform (parents, emergency services) - Help others

How to reach Families with young children (focus on kids 3-7)

	Before crisis
<i>Main message</i>	General warning, daily routine will change To parents – follow the forecast
<i>Channels</i>	All kinds of media, personnel of kindergarten, trustful information
	In crisis situation
<i>Main message</i>	Location of the flooded area. To parents – kids are safe with teachers. Location of the children
<i>Channels</i>	Usual communication channels for communication with parents (whatsapp groups, etc.). News, social media, tv, official website, other family members
	Input 1
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Stay home and away from the river. Take care of others. Get go-to (evacuation) backpack ready. Think about special medicine and food
	Input 2
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Provide safe places to go where disaster management provides communication Fire brigade and police can go around the town with announcement through the loudspeakers / megaphone

Portrait of Young firefighter organization

<i>Age</i>	Under 18
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Digital natives - Physical capabilities - Highly motivated - Resistance to stress (hopefully) - First aid - Scout skills
<i>What are the main responsibilities in daily life?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To learn (school) - To train - Hobbies, social life - Daily responsibilities at home
<i>Where do they get information for their daily activities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media - School - Friends and family
<i>What are their potential actions in different crisis situations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stay with your family - Help the community (neighbourhood) - Help the organization (youth firefighters)

How to reach Families with young children (focus on kids 3-7)

	Before crisis
<i>Main message</i>	Be prepared (emergency backpack) and warn others (family, neighbours, inclusive people)
<i>Channels</i>	Social media groups like whatsapp, e-mail, text messages
	In crisis situation
<i>Main message</i>	Stay safe and don't put yourself in danger. Help neighbours and family if possible. Follow the instructions and listen only to official channels
<i>Channels</i>	Government information, radio, TV
	Input 1
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Nothing changes
	Input 2
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Warn others, we still continue to communicate with channels that we have. Use the radio with batteries.

Portrait of Refugees (immigrants)

<i>Age</i>	All (often very diverse group, socio-economically disadvantaged)
<i>Skills</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Diverse - Education, trades and professions - From both rural and urban backgrounds - Illiterates to PhD's
<i>What are the main responsibilities in daily life?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Survival - Job search - Learning the culture and language
<i>Where do they get information for their daily activities?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Home country sources (religions, political, cultural) - Chain – internal cultural network - NGO's - Local government where they are currently located - Fellow countrymen / women - Their children – integration bridges
<i>What are their potential actions in different crisis situations?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fear / Post trauma syndrome / tragic memories and experience - Often want to help – give back to society - Think outside the box

How to reach Refugees (immigrants)

	Before crisis
<i>Main message</i>	Stay calm and authorities are equipped to deal with this. Water can be dangerous and can come suddenly and cause trees to fall, electricity cut-offs, floods can carry heavy and dangerous debris. Information about potential evacuation procedures and centres. Self-preparation packages – charge electronic devices, have food and water. Need to monitor further information.
<i>Channels</i>	Different languages, mouth to mouth via community leaders and centres. Hotline, social media channels.
	In crisis situation
<i>Main message</i>	Stay off roads, public transport will be affected. Stay informed and calm. Be prepared and ready to evacuate quickly and on short notice. We are here to help you. About emergency alert levels.
<i>Channels</i>	Automatic SMS alerts, radio, social media and other apps, talk with neighbours, press conference, liaison person for refugees.
	Input 1
<i>Main message and channels</i>	More or less the same messages in different languages with the highlight of – we are here to help you and stay prepared and informed. Could be 2-3 days or a week. Will be opened evacuation centres (with locations). Inform the authorities / liaison if you have special needs / medications / mobility, etc.
	Input 2
<i>Main message and channels</i>	Refugees in centre – easier to inform everyone. In different languages. Walkie-talkies, generators. Liaison needs to let authorities know about any special needs. Careful about making promises (better to be conservative). Power outage and telecommunications disruptions are caused by storm, not terror attack.