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The need for inclusive communication during crises – findings from European Commission-funded research

(Paris, 18 November 2021) The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the key role that communication plays in preparing for and responding to a crisis. Across Europe, members of the general public have relied on communications on what protective measures to take to curb the spread of the virus – hand washing, how to wear masks, physical distancing, when to isolate, etc. However, such communications have not always been inclusive and accessible to all groups of society. In response to this gap, researchers participating in two EU-funded projects, COVINFORM and PROACTIVE, have published a white paper providing five recommendations for inclusive communication. These recommendations are based on research undertaken on crises such as CBRNe incidents, the Covid-19 outbreak and others, and highlight that communication should be:

- accessible and inclusive,
- actionable,
- trusted and credible,
- relevant and timely,
- understandable.

The recommendations are designed with the aim of moving away from top-down, one-way communication that treats the public as a single, homogenous group toward inclusive and accessible communication that accounts for the needs of different groups. Crises such as Covid-19 and past CBRNe incidents highlight the need to engage with vulnerable groups and understand their information needs, concerns and the barriers to being able to take protective measures.

These findings should inform the design of future response measures, as well as communications to promote the adoption of such behaviours. In the inevitable event of future crises, inclusive communication will increase the resilience and protection of society, including the most vulnerable.

The critical need for inclusive communication in times of crisis is also supported by a further 16 EU-

funded research projects that have endorsed the white paper written by researchers from the COVINFORM and PROACTIVE projects. Further information on the authors and projects can be found below.

COVINFORM

COVINFORM (Grant Agreement No. 101016247) analyses Covid-19 responses at the level of government, public health, community, and information and communication, with a focus on the impact on vulnerable individuals and groups. Key outcomes of the project are an online portal and visual toolkit for stakeholders in government, public health and civil society integrating data streams, indices and indicators, maps, models, primary research and case study findings, empirically grounded policy guidance, and creative assessment tools.

PROACTIVE

PROACTIVE (Grant Agreement No. 832981) studies chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive (CBRNe) threats and evaluates the response of security professionals such as law enforcement agencies (LEAs) to the demands of civil society comprising vulnerable citizens. Evaluation of the effectiveness of existing procedures will lead to innovative proposals for policymakers and security professionals and will support the EU Action Plan for CBRN threats. The project is developing innovative tools, including an information platform for LEA use and a mobile app tailored to meet the needs of vulnerable groups.

The white paper has been endorsed by the following projects:

- [BULLSEYE](#)
- [COVIDX](#)
- [Digital Factory Alliance](#)
- [eNOTICE](#)
- [EUNOMIA](#)
- [EUR3KA](#)
- [INCLUDING](#)
- [LINKS](#)
- [NO-FEAR](#)
- [PANDEM-2](#)
- [PERISCOPE](#)
- [PHIRI](#)
- [RESISTIRE](#)
- [RiskPACC](#)
- [Search & Rescue](#)
- [STAMINA](#)

The White Paper is Available at <https://proactive-h2020.eu/wp->

<content/uploads/2021/10/COVINFORM-PROACTIVE-Whitepaper-Communication-in-times-of-crisis.pdf>

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