Links between trust in authorities and disaster behaviours

In general, people are more likely to follow the instructions of authorities in crisis situations if they trust them and if they are familiar with them (Heilbrun et al., 2010). People's belief that they are informed correctly creates a feeling of empowerment making them more likely to follow instructions, including those in preparedness phase (Mclvor et al., 2009). Otherwise, people might get involved in suboptimal behaviours such as self-decided evacuation, which can negatively influence the organized evacuation or the arrival of help (Helsloot & Ruitenberg, 2004). According to sociological theories, discussed in this deliverable, trust in authorities acts as a source of positive emotions (Douglas & Wildavsky 1982) motivating preparedness behaviour. The important task of disaster management is to create the atmosphere of trust and familiarity with the disaster management. In addition, disaster managers should also use all of the available tools to promote proactive behaviour in citizens and empower them to take an active role in the global disaster preparedness of communities.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: Communication

Disaster Phases: Prevention, Preparedness

Types of Actors Concerned: National civil protection body, Local authorities, Non-active citizens, Active citizens, Entrepreneurs, Media, Government, National research bodies, Red Cross, Military, NGOs, Law enforcement agencies, Healthcare and emergency services, European Civil Protection Mechanism, UN and other international organisations, All types of actors

Hazards: Natural hazards, Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations, Man-made intentional hazards

Recommendations:

- Engage in activities and develop strategies aiming to improve trust between citizens and authorities
- Inform citizens about the risk they may face and about possible actions and measures, they can take to reduce vulnerability and better prepare themselves
- Foster social connectedness and the development of a strong sense of community, as these encourage citizens to help each other in disaster situations
- Use cultural factors to improve the effectiveness of disaster communication

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Source

Deliverable D4.2 "Report on 'risk cultures' in the context of disasters" (page 69)