



Prior positive experiences with authorities increase trust levels in a disaster

Furthermore, trust was not only drawn from personal experiences of a disaster or emergency situation, but also from feelings of security in situations which were perceived as hazardous. Here, in particular those younger participants who had not experienced disasters or serious personal emergencies referred to perceived man-made hazards, e.g. in mass gatherings: “I have a lot of trust in the police, fire brigade and so on. I attended a protest march organised by the Social Democratic Party of Germany in Frankfurt some time ago. There was a large counter-demonstration by neo-Nazis as well. Hundreds of police were present and they made you feel quite safe” (G2-P1). “I was in Frankfurt once and there was an unaccompanied suitcase sitting on a metro platform. The area was immediately fenced off and they showed up with sniffer dogs for explosives. Of course you trust them, they take those things very seriously. They go about it very precisely, closing areas off and searching everything. At the Christmas market they were very visible everywhere as well. Even the Christmas market in Hanau was full of security forces patrolling around” (G2-P2). These links between feelings of security and trust were explained by some participants through the role of symbols, elaborating that “the uniform does provide a certain sense of security, because you know that the right people are taking care of the situation at hand” (G4-P1), and that trust in such symbols may be stronger than individual experiences: “I see more the uniform than the person that is in it. I pay less attention to the faces, but I see the entire organisation that is behind the uniform. And, I don’t know, I feel more protected” (G4-P9). However, one participant in the same group pointed out that symbols, as cultural artefacts, may as well be subject to different interpretations: “Some people may come here [to Germany] from countries where they had different experiences, because rescue teams cannot be trusted there, and then they come here into our country and they see somebody who is wearing a uniform, and then there might be a completely different reaction” (G4-P10). A similar experience was outlined by a participant of the 2nd Stakeholder Assembly in Rome, who described how a migrant child showed strong fear rather than trust towards her rescuer wearing a uniform. Similarly, this could apply to practitioners who are deployed in a disaster-struck area, where people with a recent migration background are affected, may be wary of such unintended effects.

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Norms/values](#), [Worldviews](#), [Individual/collective memory](#)

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [Local authorities](#), [National civil protection body](#), [Military](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#), [Law enforcement agencies](#)

Hazards: [Natural hazards](#), [Man-made non-intentional hazards or emergency situations](#), [Man-made intentional hazards](#)

Recommendations:

- [Use local knowledge, collective memory and shared cultural values to improve disaster preparedness, response and recovery](#)



- [Engage in activities and develop strategies aiming to improve trust between citizens and authorities](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.6 "Report on citizens' reactions and opinions: Citizen Summit 4 \(Germany\)" \(page 21\)](#)

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