



Importance of perceived personal qualities in informal leaders acting in disaster situations

During these discussions in the fourth Citizen Summit, some groups were predominantly elaborating on personal qualities perceived to be important to become an informal leader in disaster situations, such as social competence, general helpfulness, selflessness, or being a self-starter. Generally, participants shared the opinion that people who bear or take on responsibility for others in their normal lives would do the same in a disaster or emergency situation. However, whether these people will be trusted would, then, depend on the authenticity of their behaviour. Additionally, some participants (who had experienced disaster situations) described a somewhat spontaneous divide between “leaders” and “followers”: “Based on my war experience, I know that when push comes to shove, when survival is at stake, then there are two kinds of people: those who act and those who let themselves be led by others. That's the way it naturally is somehow. And it's not wrong when someone isn't able to do something, but then you have to allow yourself to be led. And that happens within a fraction of a second: You know exactly who leads and who follows” (G7-P6). “If you are in a terrible situation things cannot get any worse. And you cannot get out of it on your own. You will trust anyone who comes by to help you” (G9-P11).

Note: See source document for full reference.

Applicable to:

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

Disaster Phases: [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Red Cross](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

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

Recommendations:

- [Foster the adoption of a culture of disaster prevention and resilience by informing and motivating citizens to take action](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.6 "Report on citizens' reactions and opinions: Citizen Summit 4 \(Germany\)" \(page 24\)](#)

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