



Citizen reactions to disaster simulations as training for disaster preparedness

When presented the possibility of participating in a one-day disaster scenario exercise, at least half of the participants in all groups expressed their interest, or at least a certain “why-not” attitude: “No one would be worse off by having to invest some hours of their free time into this” (G8-P2 - see source document for full reference). Generally, when discussing this type of activity, different dynamics could be observed, each group developing their own concepts of and reasoning for participation. One concept discussed largely was the one of such simulation exercise being useful for an increased mutual understanding between practitioners and citizens “it might help you trust the emergency services more” (G6-P11); that “it helps the public” (G8-P2) and is a learning experience for both: “I don't ride the metro very often, still it might help me and emergency responders to have such scenarios [...] I would be willing to sacrifice one of my own weekends to help the emergency services learn more about how to handle disasters. You should think about more than just your own time” (G6-P5). Additionally, as one participant outlined, it can provide a feeling of security and trust in the authorities involved: “I participated in a [disaster] scenario at the airport before. It gave me a sense of security. The authorities did an incredible job. I got the impression that everyone knew exactly what they had to do. There were thousands of people on the airfield at the airport. It was incredible” (G8-P7). A similar idea was developed in G4, where the participants outlined particularly the role of understanding the processes in dealing with a disaster situation “to understand how they work” (G4-P10). Rather than being told what to do, such scenario was seen as a better option than merely participating in a “course”, because “It will also give a person a better understanding of the structure and maybe participants learn where to step in but also how the emergency response units think. What they possibly expect from the people standing around at the scene. What are their expectations of the general population, how are we expected to act, where we are in the way and where assistance is really helpful and important. And where do they [emergency services] need it but do not get it?” (G4-P9) In G7 the participants concentrated specifically on the mental experience and “perhaps being able to know yourself better” (G7-P9), “because you don't really know how you'll react in extreme situations” (G7-P3); “it helps you grow personally and to recognise and think about hazards. I think that's great” (G7-P8). Generally, it was believed that a real-life simulation would have a better learning effect, because “you also simulate the feeling of shock that you would suffer during a real disaster. You will probably be able to react better and more quickly once you have participated in such a scenario” (G9-P7), and that it may even have a longer-lasting motivational effect towards personal disaster preparedness: “[It is] an opportunity to reflect upon your own abilities and how to respond. What do I do afterwards? Perhaps once you've been exposed to it, you'll want to do even more. I think that's a good thing for all those involved” (G7-P7).

Applicable to:

Stakeholders: [Open-mindedness](#), [Communication](#), [Power relations](#), [Attitudes toward authorities](#), [Norms/values](#)

Disaster Phases: [Preparedness](#), [Response](#)

Types of Actors Concerned: [National civil protection body](#), [Local authorities](#), [Government](#), [Red Cross](#), [NGOs](#), [Military](#), [Law](#)



[enforcement agencies](#), [Healthcare and emergency services](#)

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

Recommendations:

- [Develop culturally aware disaster preparedness and response training](#)
- [Training programmes for citizens of all ages should be developed. These are necessary to increase citizens' knowledge of and preparedness in case of disasters. The training activities should be organized on the basis of a training strategy and should take various forms, ranging from emergency drill to workshops](#)

Source

[Deliverable D5.6 "Report on citizens' reactions and opinions: Citizen Summit 4 \(Germany\)" \(page 30\)](#)

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