

EU Projects POP-ALERT and TACTIC Conference

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Improving preparedness in Europe through risk communication and community-based approaches: Final conference of the POP-ALERT and TACTIC projects

On 15th and 16th March 2016, over 80 researchers and practitioners from across Europe and beyond were brought together for the final conference of the POP-ALERT and TACTIC projects. The conference provided an opportunity for participants to learn more about increasing preparedness to various types of risk, engage in lively discussions, and to network with other key stakeholders interested in preparedness.

TACTIC and POP-ALERT, sister projects both funded under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme, focus on tools for increasing community preparedness for large-scale and cross-border disasters. The first day of the conference began with welcoming speeches from Philippe Quevauviller and Quillaume Lapeyre from the Research Executive Agency, European Commission, who provided insight into the common themes addressed by both projects and highlighted the motivations for funding research involving communities. For instance, both TACTIC and POP-ALERT focus on:

- The relationship between risk perception and preparedness; how do the public perceive different types of risk and what do these perceptions mean for preparedness?
- The importance of an effective risk communication strategy
- The use of technologies to prepare both organisations and the general public for large-scale and cross-border disasters; this includes the POP-ALERT Dashboard and the TACTIC Online Self-Assessment Platform (TOSAP)
- Participatory approaches involving the involvement of stakeholders in the development of preparedness tools through the use of pilots (POP-ALERT) and case study workshops (TACTIC)
- The collection of good practices in community preparedness

The introductory presentations from TACTIC's (Christian Kuhlicke) and POP-ALERT's (Hara Caracostas) coordinators also highlighted the key differences that make the projects complementary. While Christian spoke about the different tools that TACTIC's partners have developed for four hazards (flooding, terrorism, earthquakes and epidemics/pandemics), Hara presented on POP-ALERTS all hazards approach and the project's focus on increasing the preparedness of different communities (e.g., tourists, expats, refugees). Despite the differences between the two projects, increasing community preparedness to respond to crises and disasters is the core objective.

The projects' tools

Throughout the conference, participants learnt about the different tools that had been developed for organisations (e.g., public authorities and risk communicators) and the general public to improve their preparedness. The first day of the conference focused on POP-ALERT and the Dashboard that had been created. POP-ALERT's partners presented the findings from research undertaken with the public, which underpins the development of the Dashboard, and on the pilots of the Dashboard that had been undertaken with key stakeholders in Lisbon and Corsica. The Dashboard supports community preparedness by providing: information on different categories of hazard (e.g.,

bioterrorism/pandemics, chemical emergencies and natural disasters), training tools, resources to support communities in making a plan and emergency supply kit, and by providing localised emergency information for each country in case of a crisis.

Due to POP-ALERTS focus on different communities, Nikos Moustakidis from the Greek Centre for Security Studies presented on the extensive intercultural communication analysis that had been undertaken and the different models that had examined to understand the influence of culture on communication and preparedness. Jean Christophe Bourdin from the Northern Corsica Fire Department and Maria Telhado from the Municipality of Lisbon presented the preliminary results from the two Pilot Projects and emphasised the importance of the Dashboard in their work. Antonio Chagas from Edisoft presented the project's recommendations on how to build an efficient website for public authorities. Tim Prior from ETH Zurich presented the different factors identified throughout the research process that influence people's willingness to prepare. Thorsten Ziercke from SIEMENS discussed the role of standardisation in improving crisis communication at EU level, and finally, Dennis Davis from the International Association of Fire and Rescue Services presented a number of recommendations on how to improve preparedness and resilience in Europe. The second day of the conference focused on the tools that have been developed as part of the TACTIC project. The first presentation on TACTIC involved a demonstration of the TACTIC Online Self-Assessment Platform (TOSAP). The TOSAP hosts the tools that have been developed as part of the project, including:

- **A self-assessment for organisations:** through a series of questions, the organisational self-assessment aims to support organisations in developing and evaluating their risk communication strategy
- **A self-assessment for the general public:** by answering a series of questions, the self-assessment aims to support the public in evaluating and increasing their preparedness
- **Feedback reports:** once users have completed the respective self-assessment, they will receive a short feedback report explaining the relevance of the questions that they have been asked. Users will also be provided with information on how to further enhance their risk communication strategy or preparedness
- **A library of good practices:** the library includes examples of communication and education practices (e.g., brochures and films). Users will receive examples of good practices as part of their feedback from completing the self-assessment and the library can be manually searched

Following the presentation of the TOSAP, Cheney Shreve from Northumbria University provided an overview of the literature and research examining the relationship between risk perception and preparedness, that acts as the foundation of the tools that were developed during the TACTIC project. Cheney highlighted how levels of public preparedness are typically low and how risk perception alone does not automatically mean that a person will prepare. The presentation by Nuray Karanci from Middle East Technical University, highlighted the links between TACTIC and the emBRACE project focusing on Building Resilience Amongst Communities in Europe, and the relationship between resilience and preparedness.

Preparedness lessons from across Europe and beyond

Conference participants not only had the opportunity to learn about TACTIC and POP-ALERT but also to learn about preparedness from a number of invited speakers from across the globe. Andrew Staniforth, West Yorkshire Police provided participants with information on the ATHENA project, which focuses on the use of new communication media (e.g., social media) to empower citizens and enhance their ability to respond in crisis situations. Focusing on the response to a crisis, Benoît Ramacker from the Belgium National Crisis Center, discussed the Center's response to the November 2015 Paris attacks. Benoît's presentation provided insight into how communication in response to a terrorist attack is organised and developed. Catering for a truly European audience,

Christoph Oberacker from the Bavarian Environment Agency presented the lessons learnt from the 2013 flood in Bavaria in German, with interpreters providing translations into Turkish and English. Karin Metz and Sawyer Baker from the Global Disaster Preparedness Centre (GDPC) based in the United States of America highlighted the key issues in their global preparedness work (e.g., capacity to scale, demand driven, people centred) and highlighted preparedness initiatives including the First Aid and Hazard Apps and the Business Continuity Initiative. The final presentation of the conference was by Maggie Mort, Lancaster University, who presented an overview of research undertaken to understand children's experiences and understandings of floods and how they contribute to the community's resilience and recovery. Christian Kuhlicke closed the conference and invited participants to continue the morning's discussions during lunch.

The TACTIC and POP-ALERT consortiums would like to thank all of the conference participants for their engagement, feedback and questions during the conference.

About the projects

TACTIC, <https://www.tacticproject.eu/>, @TACTIC_EU

The Tools, methods And training for CommuniTies and Society to better prepare for a Crisis (TACTIC) project aims to increase preparedness to large-scale and cross-border disasters amongst communities and societies in Europe. TACTIC has seven partners from five European countries, and is funded under the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme.⁴ Throughout its two-year duration, TACTIC has considered studies on risk perception and preparedness to develop a preparedness self-assessment enabling communities to assess how prepared they are for different types of crises. Additionally, TACTIC focuses on identifying and categorising good practices of communication and education practices for preparedness. Adopting a collaborative approach to preparedness, the self-assessment, communication and education practices have been discussed and analysed with stakeholders in a series of workshops as part of TACTIC's four case studies focusing on four types of crises: terrorism, floods, epidemics, and earthquakes. Subsequently, a long-term learning framework for improving community preparedness to a range of crisis situations will be developed. All of TACTIC's outputs will be presented in a web-based platform.

For further information on the TACTIC project, please e-mail Susan Anson at susan.anson@trilateralresearch.com

POP-ALERT, <http://www.pop-alert.eu/>, @popalerteu

POP-ALERT is a two-year project financed by the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme.⁵ It has carried out behavioural research and a series of empirical studies, taking into account new issues related to targeting both local populations and visitors such as expats or tourists (cultural differences, language barriers, etc.). A portfolio of case studies on social networking and community self-reliance initiatives has been developed and POP-ALERT has identified the best ways to blend contemporary tools with existing practices in order to create flexible and easily deployable toolkits for preparing and alerting the European population in case of a crisis. The project has focused on improving current practices around the use of messaging and cultural sharing technologies that offer the best form of accessibility and use by citizens and authorities.

⁴ The TACTIC project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 608058.

⁵ The POP-ALERT project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no 608030.

POP-ALERT used a pilot project in order to test the generic methodologies and to assess their effectiveness in raising an improved level of preparedness of the community.

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