Jean Monnet Chair Conference Proceedings in Risk and Crisis Communication in the EU

Risk and Crisis Communication in the European Union

Foreword to the Proceedings

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The first volume of the "*Risk and Crisis Communication in the EU*" proceedings brings together a collection of interdisciplinary studies on risk and crisis communication across diverse European contexts and a range of crisis and disaster types. This volume focuses on the roles of various crisis stakeholders, the communication practices of organizations and governmental bodies, and the influence of both traditional and digital media in shaping the evolving landscape of crisis communication.

The idea of this volume originates from the Jean Monnet Chair Program (2022-2025) on Risk and Crisis Communication hosted at the Department of Communication and Digital Media of the University of Western Macedonia. The Chair aims to build a cumulative knowledge on the way communication in times of crisis and disaster unfolds by various European crisis stakeholders such as EU organizations and agencies, state authorities, public figures, media organizations, NGOs, and citizens. More specifically, the Chair - and consequently this volume - tries to raise awareness on crises and risks faced by Europe; the ways European Union, member states, and other organizations in Europe have responded to various crises such as natural disasters, tourism crises, health related disasters, and migration crisis; generate insights about how new technologies and social media can be used as effective means for crisis communication by European crisis stakeholders at all levels from EU agencies, to state authorities and citizens; and identify best crisis communication practices at all phases of crisis management (prior, during, and after) supporting a European model of crisis communication,

Finally, the Chair and the Jean Monnet Chair conference adopts an interdisciplinary approach by drawing on diverse theories and methods (management, crisis communication, public relations, journalism, framing theories, psychology, anthropology, political science. and information technology) encouraging the debate among the academic community, state authorities representatives, EU officials, crisis communication professionals, journalists, civil servants, policy makers, NGOs, citizens, and volunteers on how crisis stakeholders can communicate during crises and disasters to increase coordination between authorities, to alert, to enhance crisis self-efficacy, to reduce risk, to avoid reputational damage, and ultimately build community resilience. Thus, common approaches, best practices and areas for improvement can be identified.

Driven by this Jean Monnet Chair's core focus, the proceedings consist of eleven papers presented during the online conference entitled "*Risk and Crisis Communication in the EU,*" held in Kastoria, Greece, on 29–30 December 2024. The conference was organized by the Jean Monnet Chair of the

Department of Communication and Digital Media at the University of Western Macedonia (2022–2025). Participants of the conference included academics, researchers, and practitioners from various European countries, such as Italy, Portugal, Turkey, Hungary, Norway, and Greece. The keynote speaker was Audra Diers-Lawson, who delivered a presentation entitled *"Be EPIC to Mitigate Risk: Learning from Communication Successes and Failures to Improve Citizen Engagement."*

In her keynote speech, she analyzed and compared public health communication during the COVID-19 pandemic between the authorities of the UK and Scotland. Moreover, she presented data from 11 European countries on public communication related to COVID-19 and derived valuable practical implications for practitioners concerning risk communication.

The volume is organized around three major thematic sections, namely: Risk and Disaster Communication: A Stakeholder approach; Media communication during disasters and emerging technologies; Online and Social Media Crisis Communication.

Section 1: Risk and Disaster Communication: A Stakeholder Approach

The first thematic section consists of four papers that shed light on the theoretical underpinnings that have driven risk communication research and address issues of risk and disaster communication from the perspective of young citizens and vulnerable groups. Moreover, this section explores a different type of crisis, that of tourism crisis in Greece and offers insights on effective risk management practices of tourism companies.

In the first paper "*The Role of Media and Communication Research in Risk Communication*", Alessandra Massa and Fransesca Comunello from the Department of Communication and Social Research of the Sapienza University of Rome, conducted a scoping review of the international literature in risk communication and revealed the key theories and conceptual tools utilized by researchers to understand contemporary risk communication such as communication models, risk perception models, public relations and organizational communication theories, social movement and collective action theories. The paper discusses critical gaps and areas for further investigation in risk communication research.

In the second paper "*Vulnerable Publics in the 2023 earthquake disaster: A Study of Communication Centered Experiences of Persons with Disabilties*", Pınar Özdemir, Melike Aktaş Kuyucu, and Uğur Aksoy from the Department of Public Relations and Publicity of the Ankara University, present the findings from the qualitative study on the experiences of vulnerable citizens with respect to risk and disaster communication in the aftermath of the two devastating earthquakes that hit Turkiye on February 2023. Through their study they identify important risk communication challenges and barriers that vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities face such as inaccessibility to risk information and lack of participation in disaster preparedness processes.

The third paper entitled "*Educated Youngsters' Risk Perception and Seismic Preparedness – Lessons for Crisis Communication in the Case of Earthquake-Prone Greece*" by Anna Fokaefs and Kalliopi Sapountzaki from the Department of Geography of the Harokopio University of Athens examines risk perceptions of Greek university students in regard to the earthquakes and their level

of preparedness. Through an online survey, it was shown that young Greek university students are mainly reacting to earthquakes rather that engaging in protective actions. Moreover, motivations for protective actions are related to psychological factors, prior experiences with earthquakes and emotions of students. Online sources are important channels of earthquake related information utilized by young citizens in Greece. Important implications are derived for risk and disaster communicators dealing with seismic risk communication.

The fourth paper of this section "*Exploring the Crisis Behind the Employee Experience (EX) in the Greek Hotel Sector: Preliminary Findings from a Qualitative Study*" by Georgia Papadopoulou from the Agora Market and Consumer Behavior Laboratory of Athens University of Economics and Business and Anastasios Koukopoulos from the ELTRUN – The E-Business Research Center of Athens University of Economics and Business, examines a different type of crisis, the tourism crisis of the Greek hotel sector due to the low workforce response, which in turn damages the reputation of the Greek tourism services. Using qualitative research design, the authors aim to explore how employee experience contributes on the escalation of the tourism crisis. Moreover, the paper provides important insight from a risk management perspective to prevent and better prepare the hotel sector from similar crises in the future.

Section 2. Journalism in Turbulent Times: The Role of the Media During Crises

The second thematic section consists of three studies that examine local journalistic practices during disasters, the effects of disaster media coverage on young audiences, and the impact of emerging technologies on crisis reporting..

The first paper "*Local Media, Local Disaster in a Post-Covid Era*" by Giacomo Buoncompagni from the Department of Political Science, Communication and International Relations of the University of Macerata, explores the role of local journalism in Romagna, particularly during the disaster caused by the 2023 floods. During the flood emergency, local newsrooms became vital connectors between citizens, authorities, and distant families, delivering timely, context-specific information despite technical hardships. The crisis emphasized the importance of proximity, trust, and advocacy in local journalism, with reporters prioritizing human stories and community resilience.

In the second paper "*Media Coverage of Disasters and Young Audiences: A Media and News Literacy Perspective*", Katerina Chryssanthopoulou from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, discusses the impact of disaster coverage on young audiences, such as children and teenagers. Drawing from a range of communication and media theories, as well as developmental psychology models, the paper analyzes how disaster news reporting affects young people and how youth are portrayed by the media during times of crisis. Furthermore, it offers important recommendations for journalists on how to report disaster-related news in a way that is appropriate and accessible for younger audiences. The paper also highlights the critical role of disaster news literacy in helping young citizens better prepare for future crises and strengthen their resilience.

The third paper "*Harnessing Augmented Reality, Crowdsourcing, and Big Data: Enhancing Collaboration and Responsiveness in Crisis Communication*" by Eleni Chalikiopoulou and Ioanna Eskiadi from the School of Journalism and Mass Communications of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, explores innovative media strategies in crisis reporting through three prominent case studies: Al Jazeera's use of augmented reality (AR) during the 2017 Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) crisis, the "Eyes on Russia" project by the Centre for Information Resilience (CIR) , and Al Jazeera's integration of static maps into its daily news coverage of the Russia-Ukraine war. Each case illustrates how digital tools—augmented reality, interactive maps, and crowdsourcing data—enhance public understanding of complex socio-political conflicts. Collectively, these cases highlight how media organizations are increasingly adopting advanced visual tools to improve crisis reporting.

Section 3. Digital Crisis Communication and Audience Interaction

The third thematic section of this volume consists of four studies that examine how online tools such as websites and social media are utilized by disaster or emergency management organizations such as civil protection services in various European countries. Moreover, this section addresses the importance of social media for crisis communication of organizations and reveals how social media can be of value for organizations managing geo-political crises to enhance their employees' resilience.

The first paper "*Organizational resilience in the digital era: leveraging social media platforms for Crisis Communication*" by Ana Mafalda Matias from the Department of Communication and Art of the Polytechnic University of Viseu (Portugal), Ezel Turk from the Department of Public Relations and Publicity of the Istanbul University (Turkey), and Ana Lopes from the Department of Communication and Art of the Polytechnic University of Viseu (Portugal), stresses the importance of crisis communication across the different crisis stages and the need for effective crisis communication tools for strengthening organizational resilience. The paper also introduces a coding model for categorizing crisis communication message strategies.

In the second paper, entitled "*Message Strategies of Emergency Management Organizations during Severe Weather Effects*", Panagiotis Preventis and Amalia Triantafillidou from the Department of Communication and Digital Media of the University of Western Macedonia discuss the way three emergency management services (112.gr; the Fire Brigade (FB), and the General Secretariat for Civil Protection (GSCP)) in Greece utilize social media (X platform) during severe weather events. Using content analysis based on the Warning Response Model (WRM), 156 messages were examined for elements like threat description, protective guidance, location and timeframe details, source identification, and message framing. Findings show significant differences across organizations and provide recommendations to enhance public safety messaging during severe weather events in Greece.

The third paper by Charisios Kalampoukas from the School of Social Sciences and Humanities of the Western Macedonia University, entitled "*Civil Protection Online Communication: A Comparative Analysis of European Union Member States*" explores the online presence of civil

protection organizations in EU member states, focusing on website content and communication practices. Most websites emphasized organizational information and promoted social media, while fewer included critical elements like the 112-emergency number, disaster preparedness content, or accessibility features. The findings highlight the need for more consistent, inclusive, and informative online communication across the EU. Recommendations include standardizing content, improving accessibility, and enhancing crisis-related information.

The fourth paper by Kyriakos Tsiotas and Iordanis Kotzaivazoglou from the Department of Business Administration of the International Hellenic University, entitled "*Social media and personnel resilience: Insights from the 2020 refugee crisis in Greece*", adopting an employee-oriented approach examines how social media interactions with other users affected the resilience of Greek security personnel during the 2020 refugee crisis in the Evros region. Surveying 237 security officers, it highlights the positive role of online social support and organizational identification in maintaining resilience. Findings offer insights for improving crisis communication and support mechanisms for frontline personnel during times of geo-political crisis.

The contributions in this volume demonstrate the critical role of effective risk and crisis communication in fostering trust and resilience. Anchored in the mission of the Jean Monnet Chair on Risk and Crisis Communication in the EU, this volume lays the groundwork for ongoing dialogue, research, and policy development. It is our hope that these proceedings will serve as a valuable resource for scholars, practitioners, and decision-makers committed to strengthening Europe's capacity to communicate effectively in times of crisis. The journey continues in future volumes, as we collectively strive to build a more informed, connected, and resilient European crisis communication research.

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