

Strasbourg, 06 November 2023

APCAT(2023)01 REC
Orig. English

**EUROPEAN AND MEDITERRANEAN MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT
(EUR-OPA)**

RECOMMENDATION

**Use of digital tools such as social media and mobile applications
for successful disaster risk communication**

**Adopted at the 80th meeting of
the Committee of Permanent Correspondents
and the Directors of Specialised Centres (Joint Meeting)
6-7 November 2023, Strasbourg**

*Document prepared by the Secretariat
of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement*

This document will not be distributed at the meeting. Please bring this copy

The Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA),

- A. Recalls that the Medium-Term Plan 2021 – 2025, adopted at the 14th Ministerial Meeting on 24 November 2020 in Matosinhos, Portugal, the Ministers called for the adoption of specific disaster risk reduction communications policies and dissemination accurate and non-sensitive disaster risk, hazard and disaster information in a simple, transparent, easy-to-understand and accessible manner;
- B. Notes that one of the priorities listed in the Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025 called for the Committee to develop guidelines on the greater use social media, traditional media, big data and mobile phone networks, to support national measures for successful disaster risk communication;
- C. Recognises that the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030 invites states to use media, including social media, and mobile phone networks to leverage knowledge for the purpose of pre-disaster risk assessment, for prevention and mitigation and for the development and implementation of appropriate preparedness and effective response to disasters;
- D. Considers that the effect of disasters can be reduced if people are aware of disaster risks, prepare for them and know how to act in emergency situations;
- E. Recognises that social media platforms have become a feature of everyday lives of millions of people and can play a vital role in saving and safeguarding people's lives and livelihoods.
- F. Notes that of media pressure, such as rumours or information disorder campaigns on social media may cause panic or fear which may have disastrous consequences for the public.

Recommends that member States of the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA):

1. develop, as part of prevention and preparedness planning, national policies, legal framework, plans and programmes to support the integration and use of digital tools such as social media into practices and facilitate communication and collaboration with civil society;
2. embrace digital opportunities by including, in response to disasters and emergency management, specific networks of actors to monitor the social media environment;
3. integrate, as part of prevention and preparedness measures, regular use of mobile networks, cell broadcast and social media in their awareness raising and communication campaigns to build trust of the public;
4. ensure during emergency management and when responding to disasters real-time top-down communication through historical and new media such as mobile networks,

cell broadcast and social media) to provide timely, accurate and pertinent information to the public;

5. mobilise digital expert communities to both collect relevant data and information regarding the state of roads, bridges, water levels, electricity and mobile networks and update usual maps used by the public;
6. use social media data as an additional situational assessment tool to obtain clearest vision of the disaster on the field and scale up or down the response measures accordingly;
7. monitor the digital space to identify any potential information disorders (rumours or disinformation campaigns) to avoid any panic or fear which may lead to disastrous consequences on the field;
8. engage with the public by communicating using cell-broadcast and social media about the situation and answer whenever possible to their queries and requests;
9. mobilise and engage civil society in the preparation, response and recovery stages using digital tools whenever possible and relevant accordingly with national legal framework.

Invites the Secretariat to submit the Recommendation 2023-1 to the Committee of Ministers for information and possible distribution to all member States of the Council of Europe.