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## **Deliverable D6.1:** **Guidelines for the use of new media by the public in crisis situations**

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# Tips and tricks for citizens

*How to use new media during crisis situations?*



## Guidelines for European citizens

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report provides guidelines that citizens may help in the optimal use of social media during crisis situations. Tips and tricks are formulated for the different roles that citizens can take. In the table below we listed the tips and tricks of this chapter.

<b>KIND OF CITIZENS</b>	<b>GUIDELINES</b>
<i>Citizens as journalists (chapter 2)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a large network in pre-crisis situations</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to use an account to which citizen journalists can login to disseminate information</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use resources that can give you the confirmation of information</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always consider the target audience when communicating information</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be aware that traditional media often take over reports from citizen journalists without verifying the information</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Add sources to your information</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make distinction between informing your target group and instructing specific people</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you are not sure of your information, report that the information is not validated</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Verify the original source, by retweeting others</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connect your information to credible hash tags that are already used</li> <li>• If information proves to be incorrect, set this right</li> </ul>
<i>Citizens as volunteers and first responders (chapter 3)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participate in disaster education and training programmes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have to know which services are called into action in case of emergency</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visit the websites of governmental and non-governmental organisations dealing with emergency and crisis situations</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make use of events and social media, focused on crisis preparedness, organised by agencies or authorities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use social media to inform authorities, especially when conventional warning systems fail to operate</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In case of a power black out, use social media because they remain functional</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use common hashtags which are agreed with officials</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the official social media accounts of agencies involved in crisis</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow local organisations on your social media accounts</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If you notice misinformation, correct it and spread the correct message</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share real images in addition to text and voice communication</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Always consider which communication tool is the most appropriate</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share messages you receive through your own social media accounts</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not use social networks for emergency calls</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not follow the social media pages of people claiming to work for an agency or of unofficial homes of agencies</li> <li>• Do not share information, which you are not sure about</li> </ul>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The effectiveness of a tool depends on the type of crisis and the affected population</li> <li>• Make use of mobile devices; they can transmit information rapidly and can disclose your location</li> </ul>

<i>Citizens as self-resilient victims (chapter 4)</i>	• Share your location
	• Communicate regularly how you are doing and what you are doing
	• Send photos along with your posts
<i>Citizen as social activists (chapter 5)</i>	• Try to use a mix of interpersonal, mediated interpersonal and mass communications
	• Maintain the continuity of “public forums”
	• Methods like creating email lists can help working together
	• Use the idea of “network parties”
	• Try to develop methods that can help improve and standardize decision making processes
	• Be conscious that the data you produce in new media is monitored
	• Use counter-surveillance measures to protect data privacy and anonymity
	• Be always up to date about new developments
	• Do not reveal information about other people
	• Be aware of the disadvantages of social media
	• Try new methods of action to have impact in the public sphere
	• Besides using social, be visible in mass media
	• Use English as a second language
	• Before sharing or commenting on it, use multiple sources to verify information
• When possible, rely in information filtering technologies such as Ubaralert, Storyful and Checkdesk	
<i>Non affected citizens (news consumers) (chapter 6)</i>	• Further developing, standardizing and promoting of FOAF and SIOC is needed
	• Use services through which agencies offer the possibility for direct contact with citizens
	• Be aware of the fact that such services do not guarantee a direct connection, because of technical/personal situations
	• Be cautious with judging the incident
	• Make use of the momentum to evaluate what you would do if the crisis would affect yourself
	• Request information from authorities regarding what measures they have taken to prepare for a given incident
• Use blogs and social media to reach a large group of people in short time	

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## Change Records

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0.1	20.02.2014	Internal review	Crisislab, Koç University and Hellenic Rescue Team
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### 1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains social media tips and tricks for citizens in crisis situations. These tips and tricks are based on literature studies and case descriptions conducted for the EU COSMIC project.

In the COSMIC project it has been shown that certain acts and actions of citizens can be expected during disasters and crises. A non-exhaustive list of responses that can be expected from citizens before, during or after a crisis:

- Citizens will weigh risks to prepare for a crisis
- Citizens will organise in groups to tackle a crisis
- Depending on the (size and type of) crisis and their place within a particular community, citizens will want to share their experiences with others
- Citizens are mostly self-resilient, and therefore do not always need immediate help
- Citizens are willing to offer or to request help

The assistance of authorities and search and rescue teams during crises is mainly aimed at limiting the impact of the crisis on citizens. Earlier COSMIC-reports provided extensive details on the various roles that citizens themselves can play in a crisis situation. In COSMIC-deliverable 4.1 partners distinguished three possible roles citizens can take on in a crisis situation: citizen journalists, civil society activists and volunteers as first responders. For this task two roles will be added: firstly the citizens who are directly affected by the crisis but who are still able to act in a self-resilient manner, and secondly civilians who are not directly affected but want to be informed for other reasons such as curiosity.

Regardless of the roles citizens take, communication is central. By mutual contact or contact with official authorities citizens can request or offer help, inform governments about their situation, express their opinions, or simply produce or consume information on the particular crisis situation. The use of social and new media has led to new opportunities in this area. Not only do traditional (mass) media often require expensive communication measures such as mobile studios, this way of communication is also less fast, more indirect and less focused on the target group (the target group of social media is more demarcated). Finally, social media can take over the role of traditional media when the nature of the crises has ensured that traditional media are no longer accessible or reliable. Examples are crises in which a power blackout prohibits the dissemination of information or in which the government's information is not trusted any longer.

In this report, partners will look at how citizens can make use of available and new social media in times of crisis. To facilitate that use, tips and tricks will be presented. These are derived from information and knowledge collected and presented in COSMIC's earlier deliverables, and range from pitfalls to methods that can be used. These tips and tricks can help citizens in taking on the different roles during a crisis situation and will be presented in the form of guidelines for groups of citizens according to the different roles they can take in crisis situations (see table 1).

**Table 1: Different roles citizens can take on during a crisis situation**

	Prepare on a crisis	Citizen organise themselves before a crisis	Requesting or offering assistance	Need for information and sharing experiences
Citizen as journalists				X
Citizen as volunteers and first responders	X		X	
Citizens as self-resilient victims	X		X	
Citizens as social activists		X		
Citizens as information consumers and senders				X



## 2. GUIDELINES FOR CITIZENS AS JOURNALISTS

Citizen journalists are increasingly taking over the role of traditional mass media. This is partly due to the rise of new media and communication technologies.<sup>1</sup> In the presence of traditional media, social media can play a complementary role; in their absence social media can be a replacement. For citizen journalism to function properly new media are essential; citizens do not have the means of communication used by mass media and want to reach the widest possible audience quickly and easily. This chapter seeks to inform citizens who want to act as journalists during crises, and assists them with tips and tricks which enable them to carry out their roles more adequately. Specific points of attention are the organisational structure of citizen journalism, as well they way in which citizen journalists can communicate. Furthermore, attention is drawn to ensuring that information is validated and verified.

### 2.1 ORGANISATION OF CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

Especially in times of crisis citizen journalists can serve to complement traditional media. In certain crisis situations traditional media cannot be relied upon or cannot meet the demands of the public with regard to the provision of information. At such times citizen journalists can provide additional information. In doing so they can take the following tips and tricks into consideration:

- *Create a large network in pre-crisis situations.*  
Citizen journalists initially mainly reach people in their own network. This means that if citizen journalists create a large network in pre-crisis situations they can reach more people in a crisis situation.
- *Try to use an account to which citizen journalists can login to disseminate information.*  
Citizen journalists has to organise themselves by creating a network. Some examples of worldwide websites for citizen journalism are Global Voices Online, Open Globe and Watchdog International.

### 2.2 WAYS OF COMMUNICATING BY CITIZEN JOURNALISTS

During their activities, citizen journalists can use different tools. Social media offer them communication tools by which short, fast and direct messages can be given. Based on these findings, some possible recommendations are presented below:

- *Use resources that can give you the confirmation of information.*  
Research shows that people are searching for confirmation of information at the time they take the news to themselves. Use resources that can give that confirmation.

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<sup>1</sup> Baruh, Lemi, Alex Papadimitriou, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo and Büşra Çildaş (2014), "Report on citizens' involvement in emergency communication", *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

Supplement existing information by communicating not only text but also pictures and videos.

- *Always consider the target audience when communicating information.*

Be up to date on what means of communication the target audience uses and adjust the mode of communication and resources used accordingly. If this is not done, there is a greater risk of losing the message.

*Example: It makes little sense to alert older people for an evacuation as a precaution by Twitter. Better is it to use other means or to alert and inform their surrounding.*

#### **Other recommendations for citizen journalists**

Although not related to communication and the use of social media, citizen journalists have to consider some other advices. Firstly they must respect the professionals working on the disaster site and do not walk in their way. Especially if the organisation is fully scaled up. Secondly: try to avoid standing in the smoke (during a fire or hazardous materials incident) as much as possible and stay upwind. Smoke from fires is toxic and can cause adverse health effects in the short and longer term. Fires are unpredictable and there are many victims involved annually. Therefore, do not stay longer than necessary in the threatened area.

### **2.3 HOW TO ENSURE THAT INFORMATION IS VALIDATED AND VERIFIED?**

Besides the speed, another feature of social media is that the information cannot always be verified and validated. How can it be proven that a person really is who he or she claims to be and whether the presented information is actually true? Not only as a recipient of information, but also as the sender, it is important to be aware of the dangers of using social media. Therefore, the following tips and tricks for citizen journalists are to be considered:

- *Be aware that traditional media often take over reports from citizen journalists without verifying the information, since speed of reporting is becoming increasingly important.*

*Example: the rumours on social media about a second perpetrator in the shooting incident at a shopping mall in the Dutch municipality Alphen aan den Rijn were taken over by traditional news media without checking the information (2011).<sup>2</sup>*

- *Add sources to your information, to facilitate verifying and fact checking.*
- *Make a distinction between informing your target group and instructing specific people. Emphasise the factual information, so people can make their own choices.*
- *If you are not sure of your information: report that the information you spread is unverified or not validated.*
- *If you retweet information from others, verify the original source.*
- *Connect your information to credible hash tags that are already used.*
- *If your information proves to be incorrect, set this right by notifying your followers.*

<sup>2</sup> NOS (2011). <http://nos.nl/artikel/231769-schietpartij-alphen-ad-rijn-eeen-overzicht.html>

### 3. GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS AND FIRST RESPONDERS

In the first hours after a disaster citizens can take the role of first responders. Both in crises of enormous magnitude as in less major incidents, the official authorities are unable to perform all the necessary emergency work. The guidelines in this chapter aim to improve the quality of new media usage by potential or actual volunteers (ordinary citizens acting as first responders) who may aid emergency response and rescue. Below are some general suggestions for this specific group of citizens. They relate to their preparedness to face a crisis and list some specific do's and don'ts regarding the use of social media in a crisis situation.

#### 3.1 GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CITIZENS AS FIRST RESPONDERS IN TERMS OF PREPAREDNESS

In COSMIC (D4.1) we concluded that it is essential for citizens as first respondents to have received emergency response training prior to a crisis.<sup>3</sup> We also witnessed that while conventional methods of emergency preparedness training, such as workshops, training videos or pamphlets, are still dominant there is also an increasing utilization of new methods for training citizens. However many citizens are not aware of them. It should also be mentioned that one important problem that we observed was the inconsistent accessibility or availability of training materials online. Based on these findings, some possible recommendations are presented below:

- *Participate in disaster education and training programmes offered by public agencies or private organisations.*  
In this way you will improve your abilities to provide help in crisis situations.
- *Be aware of the national civil protection system.*  
You have to know which services are called into action in case of an emergency.
- *Visit the websites of governmental and non-governmental organizations dealing with emergency and crisis situations.*  
You may find useful information and guidelines on how to participate in response and preparation in the time of a natural disaster or an emergency.
- *Agencies and official authorities often organize events focused on crises preparedness, such as workshops and seminars, and use social media to inform the public about them.*  
Since preparedness is equally important to facing a crisis when it actually happens, civilians should search for such posts and events in the social media accounts of relevant agencies.

#### 3.2 DO'S AND DON'TS REGARDING THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA DURING A CRISIS

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<sup>3</sup> Baruh, Lemi, Alex Papadimitriou, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo and Büşra Çildaş (2014), "Report on citizens' involvement in emergency communication", *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

In COSMIC (D4.1)<sup>4</sup> we concluded that citizens’ use of social media in emergency response may potentially supplement existing data about emergencies with crowd-sourced information. Also, citizens can contribute to filtering the information and making sense of existing information for emergency response functions such as crisis mapping. To this end, below we listed some possible recommendations:

### **DO’s**

- *Use social media to inform the authorities on a specific crisis, to stay up to date with the latest developments, or to provide feedback to local authorities and other stakeholders.*
- *In case of a power black out, use social media because they frequently remain functional.*  
Social media can act as counterbalance when conventional warning systems fail to operate.
- *Use common hashtags.*  
The use of common hashtags is very important. As crisis responders you should have agreed with officials upon unique, but intuitive hashtags prior to major events in order to facilitate information sharing and avoid significant amount of extraneous information.
- *Always follow the official social media accounts of agencies involved in crisis.*
- *Follow local organizations on your social media accounts during a crisis.*  
Keep in mind that original and reliable content tends to be produced by local organizations.
- *In case you notice misinformation, correct it and spread the correct message.*
- *Share real images in addition to text and voice communications to provide a better description of the situation.*
- *In an emergency situation which is likely to affect the general population including those who are less likely to use new technologies (such as older people) always consider which communication tool is more appropriate to reach the people you want.*
- *Share messages you receive through your own social media accounts. Even if they are not interesting or useful for you, another person’s life may depend on them.*

### **Don’ts**

- *Do not use social networks for emergency calls.*  
Authorities may easily ignore them. In situations of great emergency always use official communication channels.

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<sup>4</sup> Baruh, Lemi, Alex Papadimitriou, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo and Büşra Çildaş (2014), “Report on citizens’ involvement in emergency communication”, *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

- *Do not follow the social media pages of people claiming to work for an agency or of unofficial homes of agencies because the news they receive and propagate during a crisis may not be legitimate and verified.*
- *Do not share information, which you are not sure about.*  
There is a great risk of spreading deceitful, fraudulent, incorrect or misleading information.
- *Bear in mind that the effectiveness of a communication tool such as social media depends on the type of crisis and the affected population.*  
If the affected populations are older people or disabled people, who are less likely to use new technologies, then don't use social media to reach them. Instead, use more traditional media outlets.

#### 4. GUIDELINES FOR CITIZENS AS SELF-RESILIENT VICTIMS

In the former chapter it was shown that citizens could be first responders during a crisis. At major incidents emergency services often lack the capacity to provide help to all. Additionally they work under great pressure. As a result, an appeal must be made to the own resilience and abilities of people. Often this does not involve victims that are severely injured in an emergency or people who naturally are not self-resilient, such as the sick and the elderly, although these groups can exhibit self-resilient behaviour to some extent.

*Example 1: During the power outage in the Bommelerwaard (in The Netherlands) in 2007, it were mainly the elderly who exhibited self-resilient behaviour.*

*Example 2: Short after the air crash on the runway ‘Polderbaan’ near Schiphol, a victim of the crash who was suffered with serious back injury was able to get himself in safety on hundreds of metres distance of the plane.*

The concept of self-resilience, extensively discussed in D1.1, refers to the response of both individuals and groups involved in a crisis situation, and means that people can save themselves.<sup>5</sup> However, this still implies that subsequently help may be needed. This help can come from first responders (see previous sections) or official emergency agencies. The use of new and social media can be used as an instrument to request such help. This chapter discusses the way in which self-resilient victims can use social media in crisis situations. In particular tips and tricks for the disclosure of locations and asking for help will be presented.

##### 4.1 DISCLOSURE OF LOCATIONS AND ASKING FOR HELP

When people are self-resilient, this means that they initially do not need to be rescued or assisted by the government. However, to obtain help subsequently it may be important that victims give signals where they are located, for example to guide search and rescue teams. Social media and mobile devices offer new opportunities to do so, especially in situations in which technologies like landlines are destroyed or inaccessible. Tips and tricks for this use are:

- *Make use of mobile devices; they can transmit information rapidly and can disclose your location.*

In most situations where several people are together, at least some people will have access to mobile devices. Google Personfinder is an example of an application that allows citizens to indicate where they are located– and how they are doing.

- *Share your location.*

Foursquare and Facebook are applications by which you can transmit your current location. In times of crisis, this functionality makes it possible for professional (medical) workers to monitor how many people are in a certain place. If self-resilient

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<sup>5</sup> Watson, Hayley, Kush Wadwha, Rachel Finn, Ioannis Kotsiopoulos, Angelos Yannopoulos, Jelle Groenendaal, Arjen Schmidt, David de Vries and Ira Helsloot, “Report on security crises with high societal impact”, *Deliverable 1.1 of the COSMIC project*, July 2013.

citizens use these functionalities, professional help teams can better assess how and on which locations resources should be delivered.

(The difference between Google Personfinder on the one hand and Foursquare and Facebook on the other hand is that Google Personfinder is specific meant for disclosing locations, while the other two are applications by which transmitting locations is an option.)

- *Communicate regularly on how you are doing and what you are doing.*  
This information will be monitored by resilient citizens and responders who identify where the greatest demand for care is.

In second instance, also self-resilient citizens can need the help from the official authorities and agencies. On the moment they need help, it's important that they can send messages by which they can be identified. In addition to the tips above, an important advice is:

- *Send photos along with your posts.*  
Based on these pictures, first responders can better assess what help is needed.

## 5. GUIDELINES FOR CITIZENS AS SOCIAL ACTIVISTS

In COSMIC (D4.1) partners presented the act of citizens as social activists and examines how they organise, engage, communicate and collaborate and how they utilise various new media tools for these purposes.<sup>6</sup> In this chapter we try to provide citizens who take on the role of social activists with tips and tricks and remind them of important issues of attention. Central issues in this chapter are the organisational structure and decision-making, the protection of social activists' autonomy and liberties, the communicative activities and raising awareness and the reliability and verification of information.

### 5.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND DECISION MAKING IN SOCIAL ACTIVISM

As discussed in D4.1 (COSMIC) of this report, online networks, including the web, social media and mobile networks, provide the means for activists to form more flexible networks between people.<sup>7</sup> This also enables activists to participate in multiple networks at the same time rather than being bound to a single group.

On the one hand, such flexibility of activist networks makes networks more dynamic and more inclusive in the sense that participants can easily join and leave networks to form weak ties, and ready for quick mobilization. Indeed, as illustrated by recent disasters like the Hurricane Sandy (U.S.), this flexibility is key not only for organisation during political crises but also for delivery of timely first response in the aftermath of large-scale disasters, as Hurricane Sandy was. On the other hand, this flexibility and ad-hoc nature of contemporary activist formations may also create issues related to stability and sustainability of networks.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the following tips and tricks are to be considered:

- *Try to use a mix of interpersonal, mediated interpersonal, and mass communications.*  
This is important for the sustainability of the networks. For example, networks that are built primarily on information and communication technologies should be reinforced with face-to-face communications.
- *Maintain the continuity of “public forums”.*  
These forums, which have been a main component recent occupy movements, can not only help increase the feeling of solidarity and trust but also help establish longer-term goals for engagement in participatory politics. Likewise, methods like creating e-mail lists can help the activists who have worked together before to organize easily.
- *Use the idea of “network parties”.*  
While not ideal for all social movements, the idea of “network parties”, like the Movimento 5 Stelle (M5S - 5 Star Movement) in Italy or Pirate Party in various countries in Europe, can act as a model for increasing the sustainability of social

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<sup>6</sup> Baruh, Lemi, Alex Papadimitriou, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo and Büşra Çildaş (2014), “Report on citizens' involvement in emergency communication”, *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.



activist networks by utilizing online communications to assist offline organization and mobilization.

Another characteristic of contemporary social activist networks concerns their governance and decision making mechanisms. As outlined in D4.1 (COSMIC), increasingly social activist networks utilize an open and non-hierarchical structure of assemblies and forums for decision-making. These forums act as public spaces that allow any participant to raise an issue, the issues are debated by all participants, and decisions are often made based on unanimity or consensus. Despite its valuable potential as an alternative form of conducting politics, this process of decision making may often either be too slow or may result in a spiral of silence for minority voices.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, the following has to be considered:

- *Try to develop methods that can help improve and standardize decision-making processes, integrate online and offline decision-making mechanisms, and increase accessibility and searchability of assembly decisions across different localities.*

## 5.2 PROTECTION OF SOCIAL ACTIVISTS' AUTONOMY AND LIBERTIES

In both D2.3 and D4.1 (COSMIC), the partners have discussed how new media may supplement and even, in some cases, supplant mainstream media for receiving, producing and sharing information and opinions. Particularly in authoritarian regimes, during political crises when states are inclined to limit the dissemination of information in mainstream media, new media technologies may provide a public space for dissemination of information.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, activities of citizens and the data these activities produce are increasingly subject to surveillance by corporations and states. Likewise, as outlined in D2.3, new media technologies also are being utilized by individuals for lateral surveillance – the act of monitoring other citizens. Both of these developments may have important consequences for freedom of association and freedom of speech.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, the following tips and tricks are to be considered:

- *Be conscious that the data you produce in new media is monitored.*
- *Use counter-surveillance measures to protect data privacy and anonymity.*

These measures are key in protecting freedom of speech and association. Activists should obtain anonymity to overcome monitoring that would mitigate repression by the states. Using Virtual Private Networks, applications like Tor or Wickr, or services like Hushmail, a “privacy-oriented email service with built-in encryption,” are examples to precautionary actions can be taken.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Scifo, Salvatore, and Lemi Baruh, “Report on the adverse use and reliability of new media”, *Deliverable 2.3 of the COSMIC project*, November 2013. Baruh, Lemi et al., “Report on citizens’ involvement in emergency communication”, *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

<sup>11</sup> Scifo, Salvatore, and Lemi Baruh, “Report on the adverse use and reliability of new media”, *Deliverable 2.3 of the COSMIC project*, November 2013.

- *Be always up to date about new developments.*  
As counter-surveillance measures develop, so do surveillance techniques to overcome these counter-surveillance measures. Hence, it's important to always be up to date and be on the lookout for new services that can protect privacy.
- *Don't reveal information about other people.*  
Sharing images and videos of activists in action can also trigger undue attention and be used for state monitoring.
- *Be aware of the disadvantages of social media.*  
Although services like Facebook and Twitter bring about many advantages for activists, activists should be aware about how these services engage in monitoring and utilizing data. Activists should pressure the Internet corporations for transparency about data collection and retention policies.

At this point, it is also important to note that given the extensive involvement of state authorities and private corporations on monitoring of citizens, it's important not only to look at individuals. In addition to measures that individuals may need to take to protect their privacy, involvement of supranational organisations in protecting communicational privacy of individuals is key for shielding individuals from surveillance.

### 5.3 COMMUNICATIVE ACTIVITIES AND RAISING AWARENESS

As discussed in COSMIC (D4.1), innovativeness in planning and execution of action are important aspects for social activists in raising awareness among the public.<sup>12</sup> Based on these findings, some possible recommendations are presented below:

- *Try new methods of action to have impact in the public sphere.*  
Theatricality and tactics like culture jamming, within which cultural images belonging to mainstream culture are utilized to make statements can get the public's attention.
- *Be aware that using social media for communicating first-person experiences can play a critical role in shaping the collective memory of activists.*
- *Besides using social media, be visible in mass media.*  
Although new media offer benefits for bypassing mass media, it is still almost a requisite for activists to be visible in mass media for building public opinion both globally and locally.
- *Use English as a second language.*  
Even in local political crises, using English as a second language in new media can be effective in the dissemination of information and building global awareness.

### 5.4 INFORMATION RELIABILITY AND VERIFICATION

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<sup>12</sup> Baruh, Lemi, Alex Papadimitriou, Zeynep Günel, Haluk Mert Bal, Yusuf Salman, Salvatore Scifo and Büşra Çildaş (2014), "Report on citizens' involvement in emergency communication", *Deliverable 4.1 of the COSMIC project*, January 2014.

As will be discussed in further detail in the next section, social media differ significantly from mass media in terms of practices related to information verification and dissemination. Namely, information on social media is more likely to be shared using a “publish and then filter” approach than a “filter and then publish” approach. The former approach means that often verification (and correction of false) information occurs after publication. Consequently, under the “publish and then filter” approach, false information is more likely to be replicated and disseminated. From the standpoint of social activists, the dissemination of false information may not only incite panic but also even unwitting contribution to the dissemination of the information by activists may pose a threat to the credibility of a social movement.<sup>13</sup> Hence:

- *Use multiple sources to verify information, before sharing or commenting on this information.*

As outlined in D2.3, such sources should include online resources, mass media and personal contacts who may have witnessed an incident during the crisis.

- *When possible, rely on information filtering technologies such as Ubaralert, Storyful and Checkdesk.*
- *Try to be more involved in developing, standardizing and promoting the widespread adoption of approaches such as “Friend of a Friend” (FOAF) and “Semantically Interlinked Online Communities” (SIOC), which can help link communities for gathering information and crowdsourcing information verification.<sup>14</sup>*

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Scifo, Salvatore, and Lemi Baruh, “Deliverable 2.3: Report on the adverse use and reliability of new media”, *Deliverable 2.3 of the COSMIC project*, November 2013.

## 6. GUIDELINES FOR NOT-AFFECTED CITIZENS AS INFORMATION CONSUMERS AND SENDERS

In times of crisis, people want to receive information, even if they are not involved themselves in a particular incident. They may simply want to stay up to date or become involved in the aftermath of a crisis to offer assistance or raise money. For this group of citizens there are different ways in which new and social media can be used during crisis situations:

- Two-way communication (converse/provide feedback)
- Request/offer assistance
- Relay (share a piece of information with others)
- Campaign (awareness raising/money raising)

Aspects like ‘request/offer assistance’ and ‘relay’ are already examined in the section about citizens as first responders. Below we focus on tips and tricks for the two-way communication between non-affected citizens and other actors, and on campaigning to raise awareness and/or money. Existing literature is largely focussed on how citizens can receive information; the importance of sending information by citizens is covered only to a small extent. The suggestions in this chapter can be read as a step in that direction.

### 6.1 TWO-WAY COMMUNICATION

Communication is to inform and be informed. Citizens who are not directly involved in a crisis as victim, may want to give information, but also to receive information. Especially during a crisis, this process is often difficult. It is possible that telephone services do not function by lunging electricity, making mobile devices the only remaining ways of communication. In such situations, new and social media can offer a solution. In this context, the following tips and tricks can be useful:

- *Use services through which agencies offer the possibility for direct contact with citizens.*

More and more agencies offer the possibility for direct contact through social media such as Facebook or Twitter. Such capabilities can be used, but do not guarantee a direct connection. (There can be technical or personal situations that make it difficult or impossible.) Furthermore, the reliability of the organisation with which a direct connection is possible often do determine if people can appeal to such organisations. See the textbox below for an example of direct contact with an official agency.

#### **Example: The Outbreak of H1N1 in 2009**

Consider, for example, how social media was used for information purposes during the H1N1 outbreak in 2009. According to an analysis of utilization of three social media platforms—Blogs, Twitter, and Delicious—a major source of the information being bookmarked was from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), an organization with a strong reputation and level of credibility in crisis situations, which is also a traditional source of

information active in a non-traditional media environment. The CDC was also the most-tagged key organization and social media site. Other traditional sources of information tagged included newspapers and newspaper blogs, demonstrating a clear interaction among traditional and new media.

- *Be cautious with judging the incident, especially if the context is not yet entirely clear.*
- *Make use of the momentum to evaluate what you would do if the crisis would affect yourself and determine which preparations you might want to take.*  
Parents can seize on an incident to inform their children.
- *Request information from authorities regarding what measures they have taken to prepare for a given incident, what you can do for yourself and how large the risk is in a specific area.*

## **6.2 RAISING AWARENESS AND/OR MONEY**

Some crises become bigger than necessary because of a lack of attention or financial resources. New media offer opportunities to involve more people during a crisis. As crowd funding can be used to develop new initiatives, it can also be used to solve problems during a crisis. The following tip is to be considered:

- *Use blogs and social to reach a large group of people in a short time.*  
In this way, a creative idea can also ensure a large amount of money when people are committed to the aftermath of a crisis or disaster.

## 7. CONCLUSION

This report provides guidelines that citizens may help in the optimal use of social media during crisis situations. First it is made clear what roles citizens can play during crisis. Next, tips and tricks are presented for the different roles citizens can play. All the tips and tricks can be found in the overview at the beginning of the report. In this concluding chapter we present the most important aspects to keep in mind by using social media, sorted by the different roles.

- When citizens take on the role of citizen journalists, they should be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their network. During the communication process, it's important to keep the target group into consideration and to be clear about the source of the information. In addition, validating and verifying the information is essential for citizen journalists.
- For citizens who are acting as volunteers and first responders, it is important that they prepare themselves in non-crisis periods. By using social media, these citizens can assist the official authorities in filtering information and making sense of information for emergency response functions such as crisis mapping.
- The most important tips and tricks for citizens as self-resilient victims concern the fact that they should have the possibility to disclose their location and, at a later stage, ask for help. Using applications with the feature to share the current location is essential for citizens in this role.
- Citizens as social activists should be aware that all their actions and all the information they spread are monitored. Citizens in this role should know that not only they themselves, but also their opponents dispose of new and social media. As by citizen journalists the aspect of verifying information is important here as well.
- Non-affected citizens (news consumers) will use new and social media to be informed about the crisis situation, but also in the process of raising awareness and/or money. With blogs and social media a large group of people can be reached in a short time.