

Risk Communication with an EU added value

# The preparEU Pilot Project

Recommendations for coordinated and inclusive actions to enhance population resilience across the EU



**Risk Communication with an EU added value**  
**The PreparEU Pilot Project:**  
**Recommendations for coordinated and inclusive actions**  
**to enhance population resilience across the EU**  
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## **A project shaped by changing times**

The preparEU Pilot Project was carried out during a period of significant geopolitical change. Wars, instability, shifting power dynamics, and a heightened risk landscape have brought issues related to preparedness and risk communication to the forefront in the EU. In such a context, national attitudes and political momentum can shift rapidly.

The project findings and recommendations are based on data collected through a web survey in the summer and autumn of 2024, as well as on insights gathered through dialogue and collaboration during the whole project period. The project conclusions reflect the priorities and perspectives of the participating countries during these shifting times.

Over the two years working on the project, the broader context has evolved considerably. The European Commission's launch of the Preparedness Union Strategy in March 2025 during the course of this project illustrates how these issues have climbed the political agenda. The project consortium is convinced that the need for EU coordinated risk communication actions has only grown stronger, and that even more countries are now motivated to increase population preparedness than when our data were collected. While our recommendations remain grounded in the input received, we encourage readers to interpret them in light of these developments and the growing momentum we see today.

The preparEU Pilot Consortium, September 2025

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# Introduction

This report from the preparEU Pilot Project presents recommendations intended to support more coordinated efforts to enhance public risk awareness and preparedness across the Union, and to strengthen a shared culture of preparedness.

## The preparEU Pilot Project and the process

The preparEU Pilot Project explores the potential for a more coordinated and strategic approach to risk awareness and self-preparedness among the population across the European Union. Launched in February 2024 the project, consisting of Sweden (LEAD), Norway, Spain and Belgium, supports the preparEU flagship initiative for the implementation of the Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2 “Prepare” which focuses on empowering citizens to play an active role in managing different crisis. It also complements the broader work of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), which fosters cross-border cooperation in disaster prevention, preparedness, and response.

This broader shift from crisis response toward societal resilience is strongly reflected in the European Preparedness Union Strategy (2025), which is partly built on the Niinistö report *Safer Together: Strengthening Europe’s Civilian and Military Preparedness and Readiness*. The strategy calls for a whole-of-society approach to crisis readiness, inclusive risk communication, and a culture of preparedness beginning from an early age. Although developed independently, the preparEU Pilot Project anticipates many of the Strategy’s key actions, particularly the need for consistent and basic preparedness messaging, shared tools, early childhood education and inclusive engagement with all citizens of society.

The formal objectives of the preparEU Pilot Project are to:

- Explore how a European dimension can be integrated into national risk communication practices.
- Recommend whether and how Member and Participating States should cooperate on preparedness efforts at the EU level.
- Propose targeted actions to improve preparedness among groups at risk, ensuring that no one is left behind.

To inform these objectives, the preparEU Pilot Project drew insights from the Commission's mapping and feasibility study<sup>1</sup> on how Member and Participating States are currently actively working to strengthen risk awareness and preparedness of the population. Alongside the Commission's mapping, the preparEU Pilot Project's own web-based survey and multi-stakeholder workshops provided the Pilot's principal basis for developing and assessing the five core concepts:

- Learning Programme for Schools.
- 6 Basics of Self-Preparedness.
- Groups at Risk – A Guide for Inclusive Risk Communication.
- PreparEU Day.
- Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness.

Together, the five concepts and their associated recommendations provide a practical and flexible toolkit to help translate strategic ambition into concrete action, both on the EU level as well as in the Member and Participating States.

Throughout the process, concerns have been raised in some Member and Participating States that providing the public with information about preparedness could cause fear or be misinterpreted as a sign that authorities are stepping back from their responsibilities. However, research and experience suggest the opposite: clear, honest, and practical communication strengthens public confidence and helps reduce fear by fostering a sense of control. While national contexts and public sensitivities vary, it is essential that citizens are offered the tools and guidance they need to prepare. Providing this information does not replace state responsibility in a crisis, it rather reinforces it by enabling individuals to contribute to collective resilience in informed and constructive ways.

The preparEU Pilot Project also recognises that levels of public preparedness, and the maturity of national approaches to risk communication, vary considerably across Member and Participating States. Different countries face different hazards, ranging from wildfires and earthquakes to power outages or disruptions to essential services, and therefore, naturally they will place emphasis on different aspects of self-preparedness. The recommendations in this report are therefore designed to be flexible and adaptable, offering a common framework that can be tailored to national contexts and risk landscapes.

Not 1. PreparEU Mapping and Feasibility Study Final Report, Cima Research Foundation, 2024.

## Methodology and basis for the recommendations

The recommendations in this final report are the result of a diverse and participatory process that combined data collection, expert and stakeholder input, and collaborative dialogue within the project management group. A web-based survey was conducted to gauge support for the proposed concepts and to identify gaps and good practices in current national approaches. In addition, two interactive workshops brought together experts and stakeholders from across Member and Participating States to examine and refine the concepts in depth.

This process placed a strong emphasis on co-creation and drew on a wide range of experiences from across the EU. As a result, the recommendations presented here are grounded in both evidence and stakeholder perspectives, with the aim of being both ambitious and realistic, while taking into account the diverse national contexts within the Union.

## Context and Foundations for a Culture of Preparedness

Although disaster preparedness is receiving increased attention at institutional levels, public risk awareness and individual self-preparedness remain under-developed in many Member and Participating States. There are significant variations in how different countries approach risk communication, with many lacking comprehensive, inclusive, or sustained national strategies to reach the public, especially people who are most at risk.

The importance of developing a *culture of preparedness*, where preparedness becomes a natural and integrated part of people's daily lives, is increasingly recognised within the Union. The term is frequently used across policy and practice, but it lacks a shared and operational definition. The preparEU Pilot Project has not proposed one definitive version but highlights the importance of establishing a common understanding that can guide action across all levels of governance and sectors. A clearer definition would enable stakeholders, from civil protection authorities and educators to communicators and NGOs, to work towards a shared vision, coordinate more effectively, and measure progress more consistently.

As global risks grow in scale and complexity, the need to strengthen public resilience becomes more urgent. Member and Participating States that have yet to prioritise this area could benefit from additional support and coordination to take further steps. The publication of the EU Preparedness Union Strategy in March 2025 further underscores the urgency and relevance of this work.

The strategy places a strong focus on population preparedness, recognising that empowered and informed citizens are essential to managing increasingly complex and cross-border risks. It calls for EU-level guidance on household preparedness, integration of preparedness into school curricula, tailored communication for groups at risk, and the development of shared awareness tools and campaigns.



The preparEU Pilot Project aligns directly with these priorities and provides actionable concepts to help translate strategic ambition into practical implementation.

## **The EU Added Value**

The preparEU Pilot Project supports the need for a more coordinated EU-level approach to enhancing public risk awareness and preparedness. While Member and Participating States face diverse risks and national contexts, the challenges of informing and engaging the public are shared, and often cross-border in nature. A collective EU approach is not intended to replace national efforts but can meaningfully amplify them. Coordination at this level offers clear added value in several ways:

### **Strategic alignment and consistency**

A unified EU approach to risk communication fosters coherent and credible messaging across borders. In times of uncertainty and complex threats, divergent national messages can lead to confusion and erode public trust. Coordinated communication strengthens clarity, enhances institutional credibility, and supports citizens in understanding how best to protect themselves.

### **Knowledge exchange and mutual learning**

- By facilitating the sharing of good practices, lessons learned, and innovative approaches, the EU allows Member and Participating States to build on one another's experiences. This is particularly valuable for countries with limited capacity, as they benefit from access to tools, resources, and tested strategies developed elsewhere in the Union. It also fosters continuous improvement through peer learning and benchmarking.

### **Efficient and scalable resource use**

- Joint efforts reduce duplication, lower development costs, and support the efficient use of both financial and human resources. Instead of each country developing its own risk communication tools from the ground up, EU-level resources can be adapted and scaled according to national needs.

### **Solidarity, reach, and resilience**

- Cross-border threats, such as pandemics, environmental disasters, and cyberattacks, demand a sense of shared responsibility. EU-level coordination reinforces solidarity and enables collective responses with broader reach and deeper impact. Engaging all Member and Participating States in shared initiatives also helps cultivate a stronger European identity and a more cohesive culture of preparedness.

### **Evidence-based policy and innovation**

- Pooling data and research across Member and Participating States supports more robust analysis of risk communication strategies and their outcomes. It facilitates the development of evidence-based approaches that can be refined over time and tailored to evolving risks.

# Prioritisation of concepts

## – A matrix

To support strategic planning, each of the five concepts presented in this report was assessed using a structured prioritisation matrix. The matrix was designed to guide decision-making by identifying which concepts are ready for implementation and which may require further development. It evaluates each concept across five criteria:

- Support from Member and Participating States: Based on feedback from workshops, survey results and dialogue during the project.
- Feasibility of implementation: Reflects how realistic and achievable the concept is in practice, including technical, political and organisational considerations.
- EU added value: Assesses the extent to which EU-level coordination would enhance the concept beyond what could be achieved nationally.
- Alignment with findings: Measures how well the concept corresponds with the project's data, analysis and stakeholder input.
- Clarity and precision: Considers how well-defined and actionable the concept is.

The table below summarises the assessment results across these five dimensions:

**Tabell 1.** Assessment of the five concepts based on High, Medium or Low

Concept	Level of support from MS/PS	Feasibility for implementation	EU added value	Alignment with findings	Clarity & precision
<b>Learning Programme for Schools</b>	High – Strong support from workshops and survey.	Low – Challenging due to curriculum constraints and access to education sector.	High – The EU can promote coordination, material sharing, and good practices.	High – Strong evidence base.	Medium – Further guidance needed.
<b>6 Basics of Self-Preparedness</b>	High – Recognised as a universal and practical foundation.	Medium – Adaptable, but local concerns remain.	High – Strong symbolic and practical value for EU-wide alignment.	High – Clear gap addressed.	High – Simple and universal concept.
<b>Groups at Risk – A Guide for Inclusive Risk Communication</b>	High – Broad agreement on the need for inclusive communication.	Medium – Requires stakeholder involvement and national adaptation.	High – Shared learning benefits all.	High – Strong survey and workshop backing.	Medium – Requires clearer implementation guidance.
<b>PreparEU Day</b>	Low – Considered a long-term goal with limited support.	Low – Logistical challenges and overlaps with existing initiatives.	Medium – Could unify efforts but may compete with existing initiatives.	Medium – Mixed responses from survey and workshops.	Low – Concept under-developed at this stage.
<b>Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness</b>	High – Widely supported, particularly as an enabler for other concepts.	Medium – Concerns about engagement, sustainability and content moderation.	High – Strong platform for cooperation and knowledge sharing.	High – Medium rating in the web survey. Workshops and discussions reveal this as an enabler for other concepts.	High – Clear and actionable recommendations for both MS/PS and the commission.

# Prioritised recommendations – short term

Against the backdrop of a deteriorating global situation and an increasingly complex threat landscape, urgent measures are needed to strengthen public resilience. The preparEU Pilot Project has therefore sought to highlight a set of prioritised actions that should be initiated without delay.

## Prioritised measures at the EU-level

- ☐ **Set a shared preparedness baseline:** Promote concept the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* as a common foundation for household preparedness across Member and Participating States, while clearly communicating its flexible nature and potential for national and local adaptation.
- ☐ **Coordinate preparedness messages:** Develop a basic preparEU message platform based on the Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2, Prepare, and the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* concept that can be used by all Member and Participating States and easily adopted to a national context.
- ☐ **Contribute to mutual learning and sharing:** Integrate a dedicated space for risk communication and preparedness into the existing Knowledge Network platform, structured with clear categories for resources, tools, and case studies.
- ☐ **Advance inclusive risk communication:** In cooperation with stakeholders, develop guidance on how to identify and engage groups more vulnerable to risk. Encourage Member and Participating States to treat marginalised groups as priority audiences in all risk communication efforts.
- ☐ **Foster a culture of preparedness through education:** Encourage the integration of risk awareness and self-preparedness in school education across Member and Participating States, whether through formal curricula or extracurricular activities, to help foster a culture of preparedness from an early age.

#### Prioritised measures at the national level

- ☐ **Coordinate preparedness messages:** Encourage and facilitate the integration of risk communication activities based on the concept *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness*. Once developed, make use of the planned basic preparEU message platform, based on Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2 – Prepare, to support consistency and shared messaging across the Union.
- ☐ **Contribute to mutual learning and sharing:** Share materials, good practices, and lessons learned, particularly relating to the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness*, through the Knowledge Network platform.
- ☐ **Use inclusive risk communication:** Consider groups at risk as a priority audience in all risk communication efforts. Where relevant guidance, research, and good practices exist or are developed (e.g. an EU step-by-step guide), apply these to help identify, reach, and engage such groups. Always use accessible formats to meet a wide range of needs.
- ☐ **Foster a culture of preparedness through education:** Promote risk awareness and self-preparedness in schools through formal and informal education. National education authorities should be encouraged to integrate preparedness into school programmes, supported, where available, by future EU-level guidance.

# **The preparEU Pilot Project's concept recommendations**

The following section presents the preparEU Pilot Project's five core concept recommendations, each accompanied by concrete measures targeted at both the EU level and the Member and Participating States. The concepts are structured in a consistent format to support clarity, comparability, and ease of assessment.



# 1. Concept: Learning Programme for Schools

## 1.1 About the concept

The *Learning Programme for Schools* concept aims to teach students about risks and how to be prepared. It includes engaging and educational activities and lessons suitable for different ages, covering common risks and their impacts on society, how to prepare, and what to do in emergencies. The material helps younger audiences learn the basics of self-preparedness and fosters a culture of preparedness from an early age.

As described in the *Context and Foundations for a Culture of Preparedness* section, the concept of a “culture of preparedness” is gaining ground across the Union, though it currently lacks a shared and operational definition. Schools represent a vital setting in which such a culture can begin to take root.

Embedding risk awareness and self-preparedness in school programmes contributes to fostering both individual and collective responsibility and engagement. This effort must be supported by coordinated action and a clearer common understanding of what a culture of preparedness entails across different sectors and Member and Participating States.

### 1.1.1 What the project found

The concept *Learning Programme for Schools* received the strongest support in the preparEU Pilot Project's web survey, ranking highest in terms of intended use by Member and Participating States. Respondents viewed it as a key tool to foster a culture of preparedness from an early age and appreciated the potential for students to positively influence their families and communities. The concept was widely appreciated for its long-term potential to embed preparedness into everyday life through education.

Several important reflections have been highlighted during the preparEU Pilot Project process:

- Despite strong support, the concept ranked lowest in terms of promoting the concept at the national level. This reflects concerns about the feasibility of integrating new content into already crowded school curricula.
- Workshop discussions throughout the project echoed these concerns, with participants highlighting the need for structured, recurring programmes focusing on preparedness that are embedded in education but also acknowledging the challenge of coordinating multiple stakeholders and aligning with national education systems.
- The preparEU Pilot Project showed examples of countries, such as Finland and Portugal, that are noted as having well-established national programmes, offering valuable models for others. Suggestions for implementation included playful learning approaches, competitions, and the use of role models to engage students.
- Overall, the concept was seen as highly valuable but requiring careful planning and sustained support to succeed across diverse national contexts.

### 1.1.2 Position in the prioritisation matrix

The *Learning Programme for Schools* received high support from Member and Participating States. It was recognised as a powerful tool for increasing population preparedness from an early age on. However, its feasibility for implementation was rated as low, due to the complexity of integrating new content into national education systems.

The EU added value is high, as the EU can facilitate coordination, promote good practices, and support the development of shared materials. The concept aligns well with project findings but would benefit from further clarity and implementation guidance.



### 1.1.3 Recommendations to the EU

**To maximise the value and usability of the Learning Program for Schools concept, the following actions are recommended at the EU level:**

- ☐ Encourage the inclusion of risk awareness and self-preparedness in school education across Member and Participating States, whether through curriculum content or extracurricular activities, to help foster a culture of preparedness from an early age.
- ☐ Promote and support the organisation of preparedness-related activities and exercises in schools. Encourage the use of thematic opportunities, such as already existing national preparedness days/weeks and/or international preparedness days to run scenario-based school exercises and interactive activities where students can practise and learn about preparedness in a safe, age-appropriate environment.
- ☐ Develop EU-level guidance for integrating preparedness into school education. Provide non-binding, practical guidance on how risk awareness and self-preparedness can be integrated into existing curricula or delivered through extracurricular activities. The guidance should include practical examples of how risk-related topics can be integrated into existing school subjects such as social studies, physical education, or science.

It should promote interdisciplinary and experiential learning approaches, encouraging teachers to connect preparedness themes across multiple areas of study. In addition, the guidance should highlight extracurricular options, such as games, simulations, or competitions, as effective ways to engage students and reinforce preparedness learning in playful and participatory formats. The guidance should also be coordinated with the proposed preparEU messaging platform (read more in chapter 5. Concept: preparEU Day).

- ☐ Facilitate knowledge exchange across countries through existing EU platforms. Encourage use of the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network and/or the European School Education Platform to share good practices, materials and experiences from Member and Participating States with established programmes. This could include a repository of lesson plans, toolkits, exercises and evaluation methods.
- ☐ Support the development and establishment of age-appropriate, engaging and inclusive education materials. Encourage the (co-) creation of playful learning materials and competitions that can be adapted for national use.

### 1.1.4 Recommendations to Member and Participating States

**To maximise the value and usability of the *Learning Programme for Schools* concept, the following actions are recommended at the national level:**

- ☐ Promote risk awareness and self-preparedness in schools through formal and informal education. Encourage national education authorities to integrate preparedness into school programmes.
- ☐ Identify the most feasible way to integrate risk awareness and self-preparedness into school programmes. This integration can take a variety of forms, such as the development of a dedicated course on risk awareness and self-preparedness; incorporation of relevant content into existing subjects like social studies, physical education, or science; interdisciplinary teaching approaches that connect preparedness with broader social or environmental themes; and extracurricular activities that reinforce learning through playful and interactive methods.
- ☐ Support school-based preparedness exercises and events. Organise recurring scenario-based exercises and/or thematic days (e.g., school-wide simulation of a power outage, extreme weather events, or an evacuation drill). These initiatives should involve both students and school staff and be tailored to different age groups. They may also be linked to already existing national preparedness days/weeks and/or international preparedness days.
- ☐ Facilitate knowledge exchange with other countries. Share national examples, good practices and teaching materials to EU platforms, such as the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network and/or the European School Education Platform, to support mutual learning.
- ☐ Use and adapt EU-level guidance and materials to national contexts. Where available, apply EU guidance and educational resources to introduce preparedness and risk awareness into national school curricula. These materials should be adapted to reflect local and regional risks, cultural contexts, and school systems, and should be developed in consultation with relevant education stakeholders.
- ☐ Engage students as active participants in preparedness culture. Recognise students not just as learners, but also as communicators and potential influencers within their families and communities. Involve them in preparedness projects, competition or awareness campaigns that promote the basics of self-preparedness.

### 1.1.5 Prerequisites for success

For the *Learning Programme for Schools* concept to be successful, close collaboration between civil protection actors and national education authorities is essential. Integrating risk awareness and self-preparedness into school settings, whether through formal curricula or extracurricular activities, requires alignment with national education frameworks. Cooperation with Ministries of

Education, curriculum developers, and local school networks is necessary to ensure the programme is both relevant and feasible within diverse national contexts.

Equally important is the availability of high-quality, age-appropriate and pedagogically sound teaching materials that can be easily adapted and reused. Teachers and school staff will need access to relevant resources to implement the programme effectively.

Strong political support at both EU and national levels is vital for the legitimacy and long-term sustainability of the programme. It should also be supported by recurring funding for the development, translation, dissemination and evaluation of educational content.

Finally, to ensure long-term impact, the school programme should be part of a broader and EU-coordinated effort to strengthen a culture of preparedness across the Union.

### **1.1.6 Key barriers and solutions**

A key barrier for this concept is the challenge of integrating new content into already crowded school curricula. A flexible, modular approach with options for both curriculum-based and extracurricular implementation can help overcome this. The EU could provide flexible, non-binding guidance with examples of how this can be achieved. Many schools may also lack the time, resources, or confidence to implement such programmes independently. Without structured collaboration between education and civil protection actors, uptake may be limited. This barrier can be mitigated through EU-supported guidance, adaptable materials, and knowledge exchange via platforms like the Union Civil Protection Network and/or the European School Education Platform. Co-developing engaging tools, such as games or scenario-based exercises, can lower the threshold for participation.

Finally, to avoid the perception of a top-down initiative, it is important to involve national and local actors early in the process. Allowing schools to adapt content and connect activities to existing local initiatives can help build ownership and long-term commitment.

### **1.1.7 Expected impact**

Integrating risk awareness and self-preparedness into school education is expected to help foster a culture of preparedness from an early age. Teaching children how to recognise risks and respond appropriately can empower them to act safely in emergencies. In turn, they may influence preparedness behaviours within their families and wider communities.

The concept also aims to reinforce the message that preparedness is a shared social value, not merely an individual responsibility. The school programme can improve public understanding of risks, reduce vulnerability, and build greater trust in institutions.

### 1.1.8 Recommended next step

As a next step, the development of EU-level guidance should begin, outlining how risk awareness and preparedness can be integrated into school settings in ways that are flexible and adaptable to different national education systems. This guidance should be informed by a mapping of existing school-based risk awareness and preparedness programmes across Member and Participating States, in order to identify good practices, gaps, and opportunities for alignment.

In parallel, the EU should also facilitate the collection and exchange of existing national programmes and materials through the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network and/or the European School Education Platform. This will support mutual learning and help reduce duplication of effort.

### 1.1.9 Suggested timeframe

The current security situation calls for urgent action to strengthen preparedness and enhance the capacity to manage a range of crises, including the risk of war. Initial steps such as mapping existing programmes and developing EU-level guidance could start as early as 2025 (short term), alongside structured knowledge exchange through EU platforms.

The concept *Learning Programme for Schools* is a medium-term initiative (2–3 years). While the concept requires careful preparation, stakeholder involvement, and coordination with national education authorities, implementation can begin within a few years. Although the European Preparedness Union Strategy sets a target of 2025 for promoting preparedness in school education, the preparEU Pilot Project notes that this timeline may be challenging to achieve in practice.

### 1.1.10 Evaluation

Evaluation should assess the extent to which risk awareness and preparedness-focused school programmes have been embedded into curricula or extracurricular activities, and whether they contribute to long-term behavioural change. Feedback from national actors involved in implementation, such as civil protection authorities, curriculum developers, and educators, will be essential for refining the guidance and supporting materials.

The Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network can serve as a platform for sharing evaluation results, lessons learned, and examples of successful implementation across the Union.



## 2. Concept: Groups at Risk<sup>2</sup> – A Guide for Inclusive Risk Communication

### 2.1 About the concept

The *Groups at Risk – A Guide for Inclusive Risk Communication* concept focuses on the development of a step-by-step guide to help identify marginalised groups, understand their needs and capacities in a crisis, and engage them meaningfully in preparedness measures. The guide should also include good practices and tools already used by Member and Participating States to reach and involve groups who can be more vulnerable to risks than others. The overall goal is to support professionals, such as government officials and risk communicators, in carrying out inclusive and democratic risk communication.

Not 2. Earlier drafts of the concept recommendations used the term “vulnerable groups.” In the final version, this has been replaced with more inclusive terminology. This shift recognises that individuals – including persons with disabilities – are not inherently vulnerable; rather, vulnerability arises from societal barriers and a lack of adequate support (see: IASC Guidelines on the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities in Humanitarian Action, 2019; Sendai Framework, 2015).

### 2.1.1 What the project found

The concept *Groups at Risk – A Guide for Inclusive Risk Communication* received strong support during the preparEU Pilot Project process. Feedback from participants at the workshop held during the Civil Protection Forum 2024, indicated solid support for this concept, while also highlighting, among other points, the need to raise awareness among local authorities about the importance of addressing groups at risk.

The concept also received the highest level of support in the project's web survey, both in terms of promoting it at national level and recognising its relevance for improving their own countries' risk communication efforts. Challenges highlighted in the survey included the difficulty of identifying relevant groups and addressing diversity.

Several important reflections have been highlighted during the preparEU Pilot Project process:

- Identifying critical groups, addressing diversity, and engaging affected populations in preparedness measures is widely perceived as complex and challenging.
- There is a clear need for a more precise and shared definition of "groups at risk".
- The project's own web survey showed that 90 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that a concrete Groups at Risk guide would address an existing need. Several countries expressed a need for practical tools and guidance to support authorities in engaging these groups more effectively.
- Many countries emphasised that inclusive risk communication should become an integral part of all future risk awareness and preparedness initiatives.
- Limited resources were frequently cited as a challenge for the implementation of a more inclusive risk communication strategy.

### 2.1.2 Position in the prioritisation matrix

The level of support for this concept from Member and Participating States is high, based on the outcomes of workshops, survey data, and project discussions. This indicates broad endorsement and minimal objections, along with a shared recognition of the need for stronger commitment to inclusive risk communication.

The feasibility of implementing the concept – i.e., how realistic and achievable it is in practice – is assessed as medium. Successful implementation will require the involvement of key stakeholders and adaptation to national contexts. Support from the EU level would significantly enhance feasibility.

The EU added value is assessed as high. The sharing of good practices and awareness-raising activities, such as EU-developed guidelines, would benefit all Member and Participating States and help build more coherent approaches across the Union.

The concept's alignment with findings from the project's web survey, and related workshops is also high. It is clearly supported by both data and analysis. There is a strong consensus that most existing risk communication strategies lack an inclusive approach, and that this gap must be addressed.

### 2.1.3 Recommendations to the EU-level

The following recommendations have been developed in cooperation with *The Swedish Disability Rights Federation* and *European Disability Forum*.

**To maximise the value and usability of the *Groups at Risk* concept, the following actions are recommended at the EU level:**

- ☐ Recommend that all Member and Participating States prioritise marginalised groups as key target audiences for all risk communication activities.
- ☐ Ensure the meaningful participation of persons with disabilities and other at-risk groups, through their representative organisations, in the development of preparedness and crisis management strategies. Participation must begin at the earliest stages of planning, with budgets allocated for accessibility and reasonable accommodation.
- ☐ All risk communication should be fully accessible to persons with various types of disabilities. Availability in multiple formats (e.g. sign language, easy-to-read materials, braille, pictograms, and audio description) and through multiple communication channels and technologies should be standard practice.
- ☐ Initiate the development of a step-by-step guide for risk communicators, in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The guide should provide recommendations on how to identify at-risk groups, assess their needs and capacities, and outline inclusive methods for involving these groups in preparedness planning from the outset.
- ☐ Create accessible, practical guidance on emergency preparedness and response tailored to a variety of disabilities, including sensory, physical, and intellectual. First responders should be trained to recognise different disabilities and adapt their actions to individual needs.
- ☐ Develop information materials about self-preparedness in a range of languages. These should be based on the concept *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* and designed to offer clear, universal guidance while helping to overcome language and communication barriers.
- ☐ Create a library of pictorial or symbol-based communication materials for those who rely on visual communication. Strong visuals enhance accessibility for multiple groups, like individuals with low literacy levels, non-native speakers, people with cognitive impairments, hearing impairments, and others who may face barriers to traditional written or verbal communication.
- ☐ Encourage the development of national advisory boards composed of representatives from umbrella organisations, such as disability rights groups and others representing heterogeneous at-risk populations.

These boards will support inclusive engagement in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The EU level should provide dedicated funding to support their establishment and functioning.

- ☐ Promote and facilitate the exchange of successful approaches for involving and engaging groups at most risk in preparedness actions, e.g., via the Knowledge Network Platform (read more in chapter 3. Concept: Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness).

## 2.1.4 Recommendations to Member and Participating States

**To maximise the value and usability of the Groups at Risk concept, the following actions are recommended at the national level:**

- ☐ In all risk communication, prioritise groups at risk as a key target audience. Ensure the use of multiple accessible formats, such as sign language, easy-to-read materials, pictograms, braille, and audio description, as well as a wide range of communication channels.
- ☐ Identify groups most at risk and understand their specific needs and capacities in relation to risk awareness and self-preparedness. This should be done through a bottom-up approach and, where available, guided by EU step-by-step recommendations once developed.
- ☐ From an early stage, involve representatives from umbrella organisations that advocate for groups at risk, such as Organisations of Persons with Disabilities (OPDs), other NGOs, and civil society organisations, in risk communication activities. Their active participation enhances resilience and self-efficacy and should be based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).
- ☐ Establish advisory boards comprising representatives from different umbrella organisations (including those representing persons with disabilities and other at-risk groups) to ensure structured and sustained engagement, in line with the CRPD.
- ☐ Provide clear guidance to local and regional authorities on how to promote inclusive risk communication. This could include a community engagement toolkit containing ready-to-use materials for organising events tailored to groups most at risk. Resources might include invitation templates, presentation materials, and step-by-step guides for conducting self-preparedness workshops.
- ☐ Adapt the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* concept to the needs of persons with various disabilities. This should be done through active involvement of target groups and with particular attention to the needs of those in marginalised socio-economic conditions.



- Provide specific, accessible advice on key preparedness areas, such as shelter use, evacuation, and early warning systems, for people with different disabilities (e.g. hearing, visual, cognitive, and mobility impairments). This information should also be translated into multiple languages and adapted for temporary visitors, such as tourists.

### 2.1.5 Prerequisites for success

The active involvement of representatives from groups facing structural barriers in all risk communication activities is essential, and arguably the most critical success factor, for developing inclusive risk communication. A whole-of-society approach helps to foster an inclusive culture of preparedness and resilience, with citizens meaningfully engaged. When such groups are actively involved, efforts and initiatives are more effective, better targeted, and more likely to result in tangible impact.

Developing an action plan can help prioritise and sequence the activities outlined in this concept. Such a plan would clarify the need for, and the importance of, promoting inclusive risk communication across the EU. It would also set clear expectations for Member and Participating States by highlighting their role in advancing this work.

The action plan should define responsibilities across different levels of governance and include mechanisms for regular follow-up and reporting. This will support transparency, facilitate knowledge-sharing between Member and Participating States, and ensure continuous progress towards a more inclusive and effective risk communication framework.

### 2.1.6 Key barriers and solutions

Few authorities currently have systems in place that are fully accessible to those most at risk. Addressing this will require time, resources, and tailored approaches. Clear support and practical guidelines are essential to make such cooperation feel both achievable and worthwhile for Member and Participating States.

The needs and circumstances of at-risk groups are highly diverse, which may initially seem challenging. Risk communication must be offered in multiple formats, using solutions that are as inclusive as possible. One effective strategy is the application of universal design, design for all, which provides principles that support inclusive and accessible communication.

Engaging representatives from different groups can significantly ease implementation and improve outcomes. Individuals who are more vulnerable to risks bring unique expertise and insights into their own abilities, needs, and vulnerabilities, along with practical ideas for tailored solutions.

Language also matters. Although the term “*vulnerable groups*” remains common in EU policy and practice, it has increasingly been criticised for portraying individuals as passive or lacking agency. More inclusive and empowering alternatives, such as “*at-risk groups*,” “*groups with specific support needs*,” or “*groups facing structural barriers*”, have been proposed in academic and policy discussions. These terms shift the focus from individual limitations to systemic barriers and the need for appropriate support. Wherever possible, it is also recommended to specify which group is being referred to, to avoid overgeneralisation and promote greater clarity.

### 2.1.7 Expected impact

A more inclusive approach to risk communication is essential for building a culture of preparedness that reaches all parts of society. Excluding those who are most marginalised and at risk not only undermines trust in institutions, but also reflects a failure to uphold basic principles of equity and inclusion.

Empowering these groups and strengthening their ability to prepare for and respond to risks contributes to the overall resilience of society. It should be seen as an investment that leads to more effective outcomes and, ultimately, helps to save lives and resources. Research shows<sup>3</sup> that individuals with specific needs are both willing and able to contribute meaningfully to improving risk awareness and preparedness. Their participation enhances self-confidence, reduces marginalisation, and can lower anxiety.

Resilient societies rely on empowered citizens, including those most affected by crises. The EU, together with its Member and Participating States, can better protect all people by raising risk awareness, promoting self-reliance, and enabling every citizen to play an active role in preparedness and response.

This includes focusing on those at greater risk, such as older adults and people with disabilities, and ensuring that equality is integrated throughout preparedness efforts, in line with the Union of Equality framework.<sup>4</sup>

Not 3. See for example <https://www.undrr.org/report/2023-global-survey-report-on-persons-with-disabilities-and-disasters> and “*From Passive Recipient to Active Resource in the Crisis Management System*” MSB, Chalmers University of Technology and Lund University, 2025.

Not 4. The European Preparedness Union Strategy, 2025.

### 2.1.8 Recommended next step

The immediate next step at the EU level should be the development of a concrete step-by-step guideline on how to identify groups at risk, assess their specific needs and capacities in relation to risk awareness and preparedness, and provide advice on how to effectively involve and engage them in preparedness measures. This action should be treated as a high priority and initiated in 2025.

In addition, the EU should develop an action plan based on the recommendations outlined above, with a clear timeframe for the achievement and implementation of specific measures. Such a framework will support structured progress and help lower the threshold for initiating further inclusive risk communication efforts.

### 2.1.9 Suggested timeframe

The current security situation calls for swift action to strengthen preparedness and enhance the ability to manage various types of crises, including the risk of war. Work on a step-by-step guide should begin in 2025 as a short-term priority. Given the urgency, several actions should take place in parallel, including the development of an action plan with a clear timeline based on the recommendations outlined above.

In the meantime, Member and Participating States should begin adapting the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* (see chapter 4) to the specific needs of people most at risk, with appropriate support and guidance. In parallel, work should also begin on developing customised preparedness advice, such as guidance on shelters, evacuation, and early warning systems, including for temporary visitors such as tourists. These efforts should likewise be treated as short-term priorities.

## Evaluation

To effectively measure outreach and engagement among groups most at risk, it is essential to assess the success of efforts in delivering relevant and accessible risk information. This includes evaluating the active participation of these groups in risk awareness and preparedness initiatives, such as workshops and community meetings.

The effectiveness of communication channels should also be evaluated, ensuring that materials are tailored to diverse needs, taking into account factors such as language, readability, and the availability of assistive formats. Feedback from the target groups should be collected to determine whether the communication is clear, engaging, and inclusive.

In addition, it is important to monitor the involvement of at-risk groups in the development of local and national preparedness strategies, ensuring that their contributions are meaningfully reflected in final plans.



### **3. Concept: Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness**

#### **3.1 About the concept**

The *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness* concept is a proposed online resource to centralise and share information, tools, and strategies related to public risk awareness and risk communication across the European Union. It would enable Member and Participating States to access and contribute best practices, research findings, campaign materials, and expert contacts in a structured and accessible format. The overarching goal is to support cross-border learning, promote harmonized communication practices, and strengthen public preparedness through shared knowledge and materials.

##### **3.1.1 What the project found**

Findings from the preparEU Pilot's web survey indicate that the Web Hub concept was ranked third in terms of both promoting and using the concept at national level. Respondents particularly valued its potential to facilitate the sharing of good practices. To enhance its success, the platform should include past case cases, research, technical applications, and clearly differentiate itself from other platforms while ensuring quality control.

Identified challenges include the adaptability of best practices, language barriers, information sharing, referencing, and ensuring long-term sustainability of resources. Potential applications include supporting national risk communication strategies and improving existing practices.

Several important reflections have been highlighted during the preparEU Pilot Project process:

- There is a need for a centralised platform to share good practices and resources across Member and Participating States. Respondents highlighted how valuable it would be for national and local authorities to access existing research and pre-developed tools and strategies to enhance their own risk communication efforts. However, some respondents expressed concerns that a new web hub might overlap with existing initiatives, such as the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN). There is a fear that this could add unnecessary administrative burden and bureaucracy.
- Although the idea of a Web Hub was positively received, concerns were raised regarding its long-term sustainability and the administrative burden of establishing and maintaining a standalone platform. It was therefore suggested that the EU should prioritise leveraging existing structures to serve as a centralised resource for good practice exchange in risk and preparedness communication.
- While the concept was broadly seen as beneficial, respondents emphasised the need for ongoing maintenance, regular updates, and mechanisms to ensure the platform remains relevant and useful over time.

### 3.1.2 Position in the prioritisation matrix

The concept *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness* received high overall support throughout the preparEU Pilot Project. It was particularly valued as an enabler for the other concepts, offering a structured platform to support cooperation, knowledge sharing, and coordination across Member and Participating States.

Feasibility was assessed as medium. While the benefits are widely recognised, concerns were raised regarding engagement, long-term sustainability, and the resources needed for content moderation and upkeep. These factors may affect its practical implementation. The concept received a medium score in the web survey but was viewed more favourably in subsequent workshops and discussions. There, it became evident that a Web Hub could strengthen the visibility and operationalisation of the preparEU Pilot Project concepts by providing a shared, reliable space for exchange.

To ensure impact while managing feasibility, the project recommends enhancing existing EU platforms, particularly the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN), rather than establishing a new standalone solution. This approach leverages existing infrastructure while addressing the clear need for a centralised and accessible repository of tools, practices, and materials.

### 3.1.3 Recommendations to the EU

**To maximise the value and usability of the *Web Hub* concept, the following actions are recommended at the EU level:**

- ☐ Integrate a dedicated space within the existing Knowledge Network platform specifically for risk communication and preparedness. This space should be structured with clear categories for resources, tools, and case studies. Consolidating efforts under the Knowledge Network will help reduce duplication, streamline access, and build on established infrastructure.
- ☐ Create and manage themed discussion groups, such as inclusive risk communication, cross-border outreach, and youth engagement, to encourage professional exchange and foster a community of practice.
- ☐ Establish funding mechanisms to support the translation, adaptation, and promotion of high-quality risk communication materials developed by Member and Participating States, ensuring these resources can be shared widely and used across diverse contexts.
- ☐ Develop and publish a contribution framework that outlines submission criteria, preferred formats, quality standards, and tagging protocols for all materials uploaded to the platform. This will help maintain consistency and facilitate easier navigation and retrieval of resources.
- ☐ Recruit and fund a network of content moderators or editors, ideally drawing from Member and Participating States experts, to review submissions, ensure quality, and highlight innovative or high-impact resources. These moderators could also serve as members of the planned preparEU Pilot Project POC-network<sup>5</sup>.
- ☐ Host quarterly knowledge exchange events, such as webinars and peer-learning sessions, to showcase best practices, introduce new materials, and support cross-border collaboration.
- ☐ Provide onboarding and training materials for new users of the platform. This could include tutorials, user guides, and short courses designed to encourage active contribution and help users engage effectively with the hub.

Not 5. Belgium will establish a point of contact for risk communication as part of their work package in the preparEU Pilot Project.

### 3.1.4 Recommendations to Member and Participating States

**To maximise the value and usability of the *Web Hub* concept, the following actions are recommended at the national level:**

- ☐ Designate national experts to contribute actively to the Knowledge Network's dedicated space for risk communication and preparedness. These experts can serve as focal points for content sharing and co-ordination and may also participate in the planned preparEU Pilot Project POC-network.
- ☐ Collaborate in shaping the platform's contribution framework to ensure that national needs, contexts, and quality standards are incorporated into the way resources are submitted, tagged, and evaluated.
- ☐ Appoint national co-moderators to support the platform's ongoing management. These co-moderators would assist in curating content, maintaining relevance and quality, and helping to coordinate engagement activities.
- ☐ Promote national engagement with the platform by raising awareness among relevant professionals and encouraging practitioners and communicators to regularly use and contribute to the available resources.
- ☐ Host at least one national event annually, such as a training session, webinar, or risk communication day, that actively applies platform resources and fosters cross-border learning and cooperation. (See also Chapter 4: Concept preparEU Day.)
- ☐ Share messaging and campaign materials related to the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* via the platform to support alignment, reduce duplication, and enable adaptation by others.

### 3.1.5 Prerequisites for success

For the *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness* to succeed, it must be backed by sustained political and financial commitment. Effective implementation depends on strong coordination between EU institutions and Member and Participating States, alongside a clearly defined framework for content moderation, user engagement, and continuous improvement.

Building on the existing Knowledge Network platform offers a solid and practical foundation. However, this must be supported by dedicated resources, intuitive design, and a user-centred approach to ensure the platform remains relevant, accessible, and widely used.

### 3.1.6 Key barriers and solutions

A central barrier to success is the risk of duplicating existing efforts if a new platform is created instead of building on current structures. To address this, the *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness* should be integrated into the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN), thereby avoiding unnecessary administrative burden and ensuring coherence with ongoing initiatives.

Other challenges include language diversity, accessibility barriers, and uneven levels of national engagement. These can be mitigated by offering translation support, implementing multilingual interfaces, and providing targeted training for national contributors to encourage active participation.

Maintaining trust and relevance will also require clear editorial standards and regular content review to ensure high-quality, up-to-date, and inclusive materials across the platform.

### 3.1.7 Expected impact

The *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness* is expected to improve the quality, coherence, and accessibility of risk communication across the EU. By offering a centralised access point for tools, guidance, and peer learning, the platform will reduce duplication of effort, promote the uptake of successful practices, and empower national and local communicators.

In doing so, it will strengthen societal preparedness and contribute to fostering a shared European culture of preparedness. The Web Hub also supports the objectives of the European Preparedness Union Strategy, particularly in enhancing risk communication capacity and promoting inclusive communication across Member and Participating States.



### 3.1.8 Recommended next step

The immediate next step is to operationalise the dedicated risk communication space within the Knowledge Network platform. This involves clearly defining its scope and core functions, appointing lead moderators, developing user guidelines, and curating an initial collection of high-quality resources.

To ensure relevance and usability, a pilot phase with selected Member and Participating States should be launched to test the platform's functionality and value. This phase would provide valuable insights for refinement ahead of broader implementation.

A supporting communications strategy and a series of regular engagement events, such as webinars or orientation sessions, should accompany the launch to raise awareness and promote active use of the platform from the outset.

### 3.1.9 Suggested timeframe

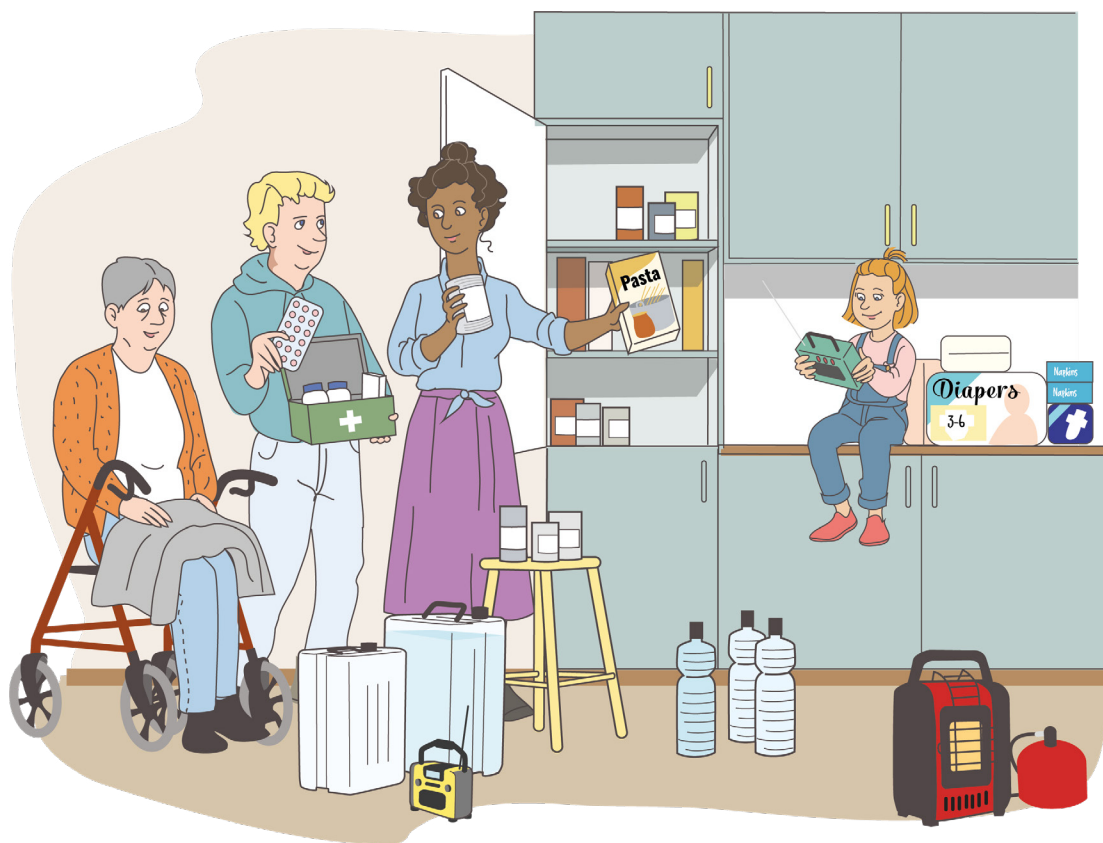
Given the current security environment and the growing need to strengthen societal preparedness, this initiative should be treated as a short-to-medium-term priority. Integration into the existing Knowledge Network platform can begin immediately, with initial development, testing, and pilot implementation taking place in 2025.

Full roll-out, including regular content updates, editorial oversight, and community engagement mechanisms, should be established by mid-2026 to ensure the platform is operational, responsive, and widely used.

### 3.1.10 Evaluation

Evaluation should assess both the platform's usage and its qualitative impact on risk communication practices across the Union. Key indicators may include the number and diversity of resources shared, levels of user engagement, feedback from contributors and practitioners, and evidence of knowledge uptake in national strategies and campaigns.

To inform continuous improvement, a combination of platform analytics, periodic user surveys, and targeted interviews should be used. Oversight could be provided by a steering group composed of EU and national representatives, tasked with monitoring performance and recommending adjustments based on evolving user needs and strategic objectives.



## 4. Concept: 6 Basics of Self-Preparedness

### 4.1 About the concept

The *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* concept proposes a shared baseline for household preparedness across the Union. It defines six essential elements that every household should have in place to cope with the initial phase of a crisis:

- Water
- Food
- Warmth
- Hygiene
- Medicine
- Information and Communication

The aim is to promote a simple, clear, and non-political message that can be applied across countries and contexts. While some Member and Participating States already use similar frameworks, the 6 Basics provide an accessible starting point for others, particularly where preparedness communication is still developing.

The concept is intended as a universally relevant baseline, flexible enough to be adapted to national contexts and expanded to reflect local risks and needs. By promoting a common minimum standard, the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* help ensure that all EU citizens, regardless of their country's existing approach, have access to practical and coherent guidance on how to prepare for disruptive events.

While the 6 Basics provide a practical and essential starting point, they are not intended to capture the full breadth of preparedness. Other important dimensions, such as psychological and social readiness, the ability to evaluate and verify information, community-based preparedness, and evacuation planning, are all vital. These elements may be integrated and expanded upon at the national level, depending on each country's context, existing structures, and strategic priorities.

#### 4.1.1 What the project found

The concept of the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* received strong support throughout the preparEU Pilot Project process, particularly for its simplicity and practical utility. In the preparEU Pilot Project survey, the concept ranked second in terms of likelihood of adoption by Member and Participating States. Several countries expressed support for “fast-tracking” the 6 Basics as a way to quickly advance national efforts, especially in contexts where preparedness communication is still emerging. It was recognised as a low-threshold, easy-to-implement initiative that requires minimal adaptation while still providing meaningful impact.

However, successful uptake of the concept depends on ensuring flexibility, clarity, and a sense of shared ownership between Member and Participating States and EU institutions. These elements were emphasised as critical to achieving broad and sustainable implementation across the Union.

Several important reflections have been highlighted during the preparEU Pilot Project process:

- Multiple countries emphasize the importance of keeping the message non-political and focus on universally relevant needs such as food, water, and warmth.
- Transparency is encouraged in order to adopt the concept. Member and Participating States may wish to understand how the 6 Basics have been developed, and which countries support them.
- Ensure flexibility and modularity. The concept should remain general enough to be applicable across different national contexts, yet adaptable to reflect local risks and conditions.
- Avoid overly individualistic framing: The 6 Basics should not solely reflect middle-class or self-sufficiency narratives. Including advice on how to assist others during a crisis was seen as essential for promoting solidarity.
- Address cultural sensitivity and psychological impact: The messaging should be introduced gradually and with cultural awareness. Offering concrete and practical advice can reduce fear, foster a sense of control, and enhance self-efficacy.

- Consider financial preparedness: Some countries suggested that “cash” could be considered as a potential seventh basic need.

### 4.1.2 Position in the prioritisation matrix

In the preparEU Pilot Project prioritisation matrix, the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* scored high across multiple dimensions. It received strong support from Member and Participating States, many of whom emphasised the concept’s simplicity, clarity, and universal relevance.

The concept was assessed as medium in feasibility, with success dependent on the ability to adapt it to national and local contexts. Nevertheless, it offers clear EU added value by providing a unifying, non-political baseline that can be promoted across the Union.

While some countries already have similar frameworks in place, others are in earlier stages of developing preparedness communication. For them, the 6 Basics can serve as a practical and accessible starting point. Overall, the concept is well-aligned with the preparEU Pilot Project findings and represents a tangible contribution to the goals of the European Preparedness Union Strategy.

### 4.1.3 Recommendations to the EU

**To maximise the value and usability of the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* concept, the following actions are recommended at the EU level:**

- ☐ Promote the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* as a shared minimum standard across Member and Participating States, while clearly communicating that it serves as a foundational baseline and can be adapted to national and local contexts.
- ☐ Publish a short concept factsheet outlining the background, rationale, and the countries endorsing the concept. The factsheet should also include practical guidance on how countries at different stages of risk communication and preparedness can adopt and tailor the 6 Basics to their needs.
- ☐ Foster consistency by developing simple, recognisable icons or visual materials that Member and Participating States may choose to reuse when communicating the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness*.
- ☐ Map existing national frameworks to identify which countries already use similar concepts or messaging. Assess whether these countries have developed campaign materials that could be translated and shared through the Knowledge Network.
- ☐ Encourage exchanges of material and experience through the Knowledge Network (see also chapter 3. Concept: Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness), enabling countries to share how they have integrated the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* into national risk communication efforts.

#### 4.1.4 Recommendations to Member and Participating States

**To maximise the value and usability of the 6 Basics of Self-Preparedness concept, the following actions are recommended at the national level:**

- ☐ Support the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* as a foundation for self-preparedness and integrate into national risk communication efforts.
- ☐ Facilitate implementation at local and regional levels by encouraging and supporting authorities, civil society actors, and community-based organisations to incorporate the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* into their own communication efforts.
- ☐ Contribute to mutual learning by sharing materials, experiences, and lessons learned through the Knowledge Network (see also: Chapter 3 Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness). This includes how the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* have been communicated, received, or adapted nationally.

#### 4.1.5 Prerequisites for success

For the concept *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* to succeed across the EU, the concept should be promoted as a common standard by the Commission. It must be simple to communicate, adaptable to national contexts, and endorsed by several Member and Participating States. Flexibility is essential. Countries should be able to expand upon the concept based on their specific risk profiles and local needs.

Transparency is also key. Clear communication about how the concept was developed and which countries support it will help build trust and foster broader adoption. To further ease uptake, the EU should provide adaptable, ready-to-use materials that can be customised for national use. Throughout the preparEU Pilot Project process, stakeholders consistently emphasised the importance of clarity, flexibility, transparency, and practical tools as critical success factors.

To ensure the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* are relevant for all Member and Participating States, the concept must be framed in a way that is independent of specific national risk assessments. This can be achieved by focusing on the *consequences* of a crises, such as loss of electricity or disruptions to basic services, rather than on particular threats. The importance of self-preparedness is universal when essential societal functions are disrupted, regardless of the cause.

Instead of highlighting differences in national threat landscapes, the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* focus on what is common in every crisis: the need to meet basic needs when normal systems and infrastructure are not functioning as expected.

#### 4.1.6 Key barriers and solutions

Although the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* received strong support throughout the preparEU Pilot Project process, some countries raised concerns about potential overlap with existing national initiatives. Others emphasised the importance of ensuring the concept remains non-political, culturally sensitive, and flexible enough to reflect diverse national and local conditions.

These concerns were addressed in the development of the concept. The *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* are presented as a voluntary, low-threshold baseline that can be easily adopted by countries with existing campaigns, without requiring major adjustments. Rather than replacing national strategies, the concept complements them by providing a shared reference point. Countries without established guidance on self-preparedness can adopt the 6 Basics as they are, while those with existing materials can align their efforts with the shared European values underpinning the concept. By focusing on universal needs, the approach allows national authorities to expand and tailor messages to suit local contexts.

One specific issue raised was the duration for which households should be prepared. While some countries advise readiness for 72 hours (three days), others recommend up to one week or more. The European Preparedness Union Strategy supports a minimum timeframe of 72 hours. Although the preparEU Pilot Project endorses this general direction, it recognises that the timeframe is a sensitive topic. In response, the project refrains from specifying a duration, leaving this decision to national discretion.

Ultimately, the emphasis should not rest solely on how many days people should prepare for. What matters most is that individuals are encouraged to reflect on their own vulnerabilities and take practical steps to strengthen their capacity for self-preparedness.

#### 4.1.7 Expected impact

If widely adopted, the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* can raise the baseline for individual preparedness across Europe. By offering a shared and accessible framework, the concept helps ensure that key messages, covering water, food, warmth, hygiene, medicine, and information/communication, reach a broader segment of the population, regardless of national starting points.

The concept contributes to strengthening a common culture of preparedness across the Union, supporting greater coherence in public messaging and expectations, particularly during cross-border crises. Its non-political and universal character makes it adaptable across diverse contexts, promoting inclusivity and ease of use.

For countries with well-established strategies, the 6 Basics provide a reference point that can facilitate alignment with other Member and Participating States. For those at earlier stages of development, the concept offers a practical and ready-to-use entry point into public risk communication.

The concept is also well aligned with the objectives of the European Preparedness Union Strategy, particularly the aim of strengthening population preparedness and developing a shared narrative across Europe. In a longer perspective the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* could also help lay the foundation for more coordinated messages in a joint EU-wide campaign (see also chapter 5. Concept: preparEU Day).

#### **4.1.8 Recommended next step**

The next step is for the European Commission to formally endorse the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* and initiate the development of shared language, visual materials, and supporting resources. A concise concept note or factsheet should be published, outlining the background, rationale, and current support for the concept. This note should also provide guidance on how Member and Participating States, regardless of their current level of preparedness, can adopt, adapt, or build upon the concept.

Member and Participating States should be invited to signal their endorsement of the concept and contribute any existing communication materials that align with the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness*. Sharing these resources through the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network will foster early momentum, encourage peer learning, and provide concrete examples for others to build on.

#### **4.1.9 Suggested timeframe**

Given the current security context and the pressing need to enhance societal preparedness, the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* represent a low-threshold, high-impact initiative that can be implemented without delay. The Commission could begin developing core messaging, visual assets, and a concise concept note within the next six months. Supporting materials should be finalised by the end of 2025.

In parallel, the sharing of national experiences and examples can be coordinated through the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, in alignment with the proposed timeline for the Web Hub (see also chapter 3. Concept: Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness).

#### 4.1.10 Evaluation

The effectiveness of the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* should be assessed by examining its adoption and integration into national risk communication practices across Member and Participating States. Evaluation efforts should focus both on implementation and public impact. This includes tracking how many Member and Participating States have formally endorsed the concept and incorporated it into their national communication strategies.

It also involves monitoring the extent to which experiences, campaign materials, and tools are shared through the Union Civil Protection Knowledge Network, as outlined in the *Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness*. In addition, the level of public awareness and recall of the 6 Basics should be measured through periodic population surveys, such as the Eurobarometer or national equivalents, making use of relevant quantitative indicators where available.





## 5. Concept: PreparEU Day

### 5.1 About the concept

The *PreparEU Day* concept is a proposed annual EU-wide event designed to raise public awareness of self-preparedness and risk resilience. Its aim is to cultivate a shared culture of preparedness by supporting simultaneous national, regional, and local campaigns across Member and Participating States. These campaigns would be implemented by a range of actors on different levels, including civil protection authorities, non-governmental organisations, and private sector partners. The EU would play a coordinating role, providing core messaging and adaptable communication materials to ensure coherence while enabling each country to tailor activities to its specific context.

#### 5.1.1 What the project found

The idea of an EU-wide event, a *preparEU Day*, to promote disaster preparedness was a recommended activity in the Cima report<sup>6</sup> and was also met with interest during the preparEU Pilot Project process. The positive feedback on the concept highlighted its potential to enhance cross-border coordination, raise awareness, and foster a safety culture across Europe. This concept has the potential to capture public attention and raise awareness about preparedness across the EU. Having a unified day with a shared message could strengthen the sense of collective responsibility.

Not 6. PreparEU Mapping and Feasibility Study, Cima Research Foundation, 2024.

However, the project also identified several challenges associated with this concept. Given the current context and priorities, *PreparEU Day* was viewed as a long-term goal rather than an immediate action. It is not prioritised for near-term implementation within the preparEU Pilot Project recommendations.

Several important reflections have been highlighted during the preparEU Pilot Project process:

- Perceived benefits were acknowledged, but concerns were raised about feasibility. While many participants saw value in a cross-Union campaign, they expressed doubts about the logistical complexity of coordinating an event across multiple countries. Concerns included overlaps with existing campaigns, measurement of impact, leadership responsibilities, misinformation, cultural differences, and the risk of politicisation.
- The support for using this concept in their own country was high (82 percent – the second highest among the five different concepts), but it was also the concept that received the lowest support in terms of its potential to influence people's risk awareness and preparedness.
- Suggestions have been made to explore alternative forms of cooperation within the EU, such as digital events, webinars, or decentralised campaigns focusing on flagship preparEU issues that resonate across borders or other common denominators that are easier to integrate into existing initiatives. This approach would ensure continued engagement on key issues without the logistical burden of organising large-scale, centralised events.
- One conclusion from the preparEU Pilot Project workshop in Spain was that developing a basic shared messaging guideline should be the first step before planning an EU-wide campaign.

### 5.1.2 Position in the prioritization matrix

The concept of *preparEU Day* is currently assessed as a long-term goal, with low support from Member and Participating States at this stage.

Feasibility for implementation is also rated as low, due to anticipated challenges including logistical complexity, potential overlap with existing national and international initiatives, and concerns about cultural differences that may hinder a unified approach.

The EU added value is assessed as medium. While the concept holds promise in unifying risk awareness efforts across borders, it would need to demonstrate clear benefits beyond what countries are already doing independently and avoid duplicating current initiatives.

Alignment with project findings is also considered medium, based on mixed feedback gathered through the preparEU Pilot Project web survey and workshops.

Lastly, the clarity and precision of the concept is rated as medium. The idea would benefit from further elaboration, including more detailed implementation guidance and a clearer articulation of its intended structure, roles, and messages.

### 5.1.3 Recommendations to EU

**To maximise the value and usability of the concept *preparEU Day*, the following actions are recommended at the EU level:**

- ☐ Reframe the *preparEU Day* concept in the short term by moving away from a large-scale, centrally managed event. Instead, explore alternative forms of joint action across the EU, such as decentralized campaigns built around flagship preparEU topics or other common denominators.

These could be more easily integrated into existing national initiatives, allowing continued engagement on shared priorities without the logistical demands of a single-day, Union-wide campaign. A more extensive version of this concept may be developed over time.

- ☐ Develop a basic preparEU message platform featuring core messages aligned with the *Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2: Prepare – Increasing risk awareness and preparedness of the population*. This platform should highlight, for example, the importance of preparing for the failure of essential services, regardless of the specific cause, using the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* as a foundation.

It could also draw on behavioural and social science insights to support more effective communication and behavioural change. The EU should support Member and Participating States by sharing this content through a toolkit that includes ready-made materials such as social media assets, campaign slogans, or infographics.

- ☐ Encourage participation in existing international campaigns, such as the *International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction* (UNDRR) on 13 October. Leveraging these established campaigns provides an opportunity to amplify messages around self-preparedness and benefit from existing outreach materials.

### 5.1.4 Recommendations to Member and Participating States

**To maximise the value and usability of the concept *preparEU Day*, the following actions are recommended at the national level:**

- ☐ Participate in collective preparedness efforts by aligning with existing international campaigns, such as the *International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction* (UNDRR) on 13 October. Leveraging established campaigns allows countries to amplify key messages and benefit from shared materials.
- ☐ Integrate the *6 Basics of Self-Preparedness* into national public risk communication campaigns where relevant, and use the preparEU message platform, once developed, as a foundation for delivering consistent and universally applicable messages across the Union
- ☐ Engage the public in preparedness activities, such as basic exercises or awareness events, to regularly reinforce the importance of being prepared and to help build resilience. These activities can be linked to existing international or national preparedness days to maximise participation and impact.
- ☐ Contribute actively to shared learning by submitting national campaign materials, good practices, and implementation experiences to the *Knowledge Network platform* (see also chapter 3. Concept: Web Hub for Risk Communication and Preparedness).

### 5.1.5 Prerequisites for success

Effective national coordination is essential to ensure consistent and coherent risk communication to the public. A designated lead actor should take responsibility for bringing together key stakeholders at an early stage to co-develop a national approach to risk information. Although resource-intensive at the outset, well-coordinated national risk communication campaigns have the potential to become increasingly self-sustaining over time. To support this process, EU-level messaging and materials should be designed with flexibility in mind, enabling Member and Participating States to adapt content to local contexts and needs.

### 5.1.6 Key barriers and solutions

One of the main challenges is ensuring that local actors have the flexibility to tailor messaging and branding to their specific contexts. Overly centralised control risks reducing national and local engagement, and may unintentionally compete with existing international, national, or local initiatives.

To overcome barriers such as identifying a single campaign day suitable for all countries, and to address broader concerns around feasibility and coordination, the EU should, as a first step, focus on developing a basic preparEU message platform based on Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2 (UDRG 2). This platform would allow Member and Participating States to apply common messages in diverse contexts, fostering unity without enforcing uniformity.

A well-designed message platform will allow countries to communicate shared values while maintaining cultural and contextual relevance. It should also be responsive to the fact that public attitudes, risk perceptions, and levels of preparedness vary significantly across the Union. Recognising and accommodating these differences is essential to achieving widespread engagement and impact.

### 5.1.7 Expected impact

International awareness days exist because they provide a focused moment to mobilise public attention, encourage dialogue, and signal political commitment to critical issues. They provide a shared platform for coordinated communication, enabling a wide range of actors, from local governments and NGOs to schools and community organisations, to align around common messages and amplify each other's efforts.

A *PreparEU Day*, if framed effectively, could highlight the importance of self-preparedness, foster solidarity across borders, and enhance the visibility of both national and EU-level initiatives.

Over time, consistent messaging across the Union can reinforce public understanding, build trust, and increase the effectiveness of preparedness campaigns. Behaviour change requires repetition, visibility, and alignment across all levels of society. Even if a single coordinated EU-wide day proves challenging in the short term, joint messaging efforts and decentralised campaigns offer a valuable first step. They can help establish a common direction and demonstrate a united European commitment to resilience.

### 5.1.8 Recommended next step

As a starting point, it is essential to strengthen the coordination of preparedness messages across the Union. These messages should focus on fundamental and universal aspects of self-preparedness, such as how people can meet their basic needs when essential services like electricity are disrupted. Developing a basic preparEU message platform, grounded in Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2 (Prepare), should be the initial step.

Before launching a shared *preparEU Day*, further consideration is needed. The concept and format should be discussed in collaboration with risk communication experts from the Member and Participating States, such as through the planned preparEU Pilot Project POC-network. To ensure broad acceptance and successful implementation of any EU-wide campaign, a well-prepared design process is required. This should involve the responsible national authorities from the outset to build ownership and align approaches.

### **5.1.9 Suggested timeframe**

The current security situation calls for swift action to enhance preparedness and strengthen the ability to manage a wide range of crises, including the risk of war. A shared preparedness message platform should be developed as a near-term priority, with completion targeted before the end of 2025. This should include a clear plan for dissemination and implementation across Member and Participating States.

The idea of introducing a *preparEU Day* may become more realistic over the longer term, once foundational elements, such as coordinated messaging and stakeholder engagement, are firmly in place. With the necessary groundwork laid, a joint Union-wide campaign could be considered within the next few years.

### **5.1.10 Evaluation**

Evaluation could be coordinated through the planned preparEU Pilot Project POC-network, using indicators such as campaign reach, stakeholder participation, and public engagement with core messages. Member and Participating States should be encouraged to report on lessons learned and provide feedback through the Knowledge Network platform. This will support continuous improvement and help identify good practices and areas for further development in future preparedness communication efforts.

# The Way Forward for Action

The preparEU Pilot Project has put forward concrete proposals to foster a more coordinated Union-wide effort to strengthen a culture of preparedness and enhance the population's resilience to different crises. Now is the time to act.

The concepts and their associated recommendations in this report are identified as timely priorities for early implementation. Progress will require concrete action at both EU and national levels.

The preparEU Pilot Project encourages the institutions of the European Union to view these recommendations as a meaningful opportunity to demonstrate leadership and commitment in advancing a more resilient Union. EU-level risk communication and coordination play a key role in shaping and enabling this work. The evidence and insights underpinning these recommendations highlight the value of a coordinated and proactive approach to preparedness – one that draws on the collective strength of the Union.

By acting on these recommendations, the EU and its Member and Participating States can contribute significantly to the development of a more resilient, inclusive, and responsive framework for risk communication, in alignment with Union Disaster Resilience Goal 2: Prepare – increasing the risk awareness and preparedness of the population.



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