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SPECIAL ISSUE: PERSPECTIVES ON CRISIS AND RISK COMMUNICATION

2 Editorial. Risk communication and public trust
Isidoros Karatzas

1 The Role of the Media during Crises
George Terzis and Myria Vassiliadou

1 Science, Risks and Social Representations
Andrea Lorenzet and Federico Neresini

1 Reporting Strategies in Crisis: The Case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
Afroditi Bontzoulou and Periklis Politis

26 Public Risk-Perception and Successful Risk-Communication
Ben Duncan

31 A Prospective Look at Risk Communication in the Nanotechnology Field
Emmanuelle Schuler

38 Social Dialogue and the Tolerability of Risk Framework
Frederic Boudier

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Special Issue: Perspectives on Crisis and Risk Communication**2 Editorial. Risk communication and public trust****8 The Role of the Media during Crises**

The role of the media during a crisis reflects its socio-political context. Understanding this environment is therefore the starting point for approaches to handling the relationships between political institutions, the media and their audiences during crises.

15 Science, Risks and Social Representations

Science-related crises have become increasingly prominent in the media in recent years. Understanding how scientists' and the general public's assessments of risk differ is crucial to effective scientific communication.

20 Reporting Strategies in Crisis: The Case of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome

During science-related crises the public receives much of its information from the media. Understanding the strategies that reporters follow during a crisis makes it easier to cooperate with them so as to transmit clear and accurate information to the public.

26 Public Risk-Perception and Successful Risk-Communication

Better governance of risk assessment and risk management can help build trust between the public and policy-makers, but this does not always lead to easier risk communication. Understanding how perceptions of risk are formed is crucial for policy-makers, risk assessors and communicators.

31 A Prospective Look at Risk Communication in the Nanotechnology Field

Public scepticism and resistance can significantly hamper the development of new technologies. As nanotechnology unfolds worldwide into commercially available products, discussions on how to assess and manage the potential risks are gathering momentum.

38 Social Dialogue and the Tolerability of Risk Framework

The "tolerability of risk" (TOR) framework has proved to be a flexible and cost-effective way of managing risk by balancing individual and societal risks. Although perhaps not directly applicable outside the context in which it evolved, it can offer useful lessons.

We are pleased to announce that readers can now obtain advance notice of the articles appearing in future editions of *The IPTS REPORT* by e-mail. To subscribe to our e-mail newsletter, send an email to listserv@listserv.jrc.es with the words "subscribe IPTS-REPORT" in the body of the message.

Public Communication on Health and Risk Issues

- Identify common interests (e.g., 'we are interested in the health and safety of our children').
- Identify objectives (short-term and long-term).
- Acknowledge while recognising political/economic interests and hidden agendas.
- Identify assessment and ethical community values.
- Identify who has an interest in the issue (non-governmental organisations, trade associations, etc.).
- Identify those integral for successful delivery of information.
- Identify those who will benefit from the information.
- Identify those who will be affected by your participants.
- Identify those who will be affected by your advocacy groups, organisations, the public, etc.
- Identify their needs, their concerns, and the potential mechanisms to reach them.
- Identify your audience, including cultural variables.
- Conduct survey, polls, baseline, etc.
- Conduct focus groups, observational studies, survey/baseline.
- Identify patterns of the audience (e.g. how do they get information)
- Determine how to communicate with public(s).
- Determine if crisis is immediately in crisis.
- Acknowledge and respond to emotions, speak clearly and understandably.
- Be honest and admit it, and establish tracking mechanism(s).
- Be more about fairness, competence, and empathy than data.
- Do not over-disclose - never lie.
- Establish keywords and benchmarks for your planning and implementation.
- Identify and understand the message.
- Identify mechanisms for the delivery of messages.
- Consider consequences before making major decisions or announcements.
- Consider the big picture in perspective; avoid comparisons that trivialise.
- Identify a high-level, consistent messenger.
- Consider direct public/audience communication.
- Consider openness and accessibility.
- Consider many media, radio call-in, free calls, bulletin boards, etc.
- Remember that you cannot do everything.
- Determine what is to be taken.
- Do not give them less information.
- Consider message effectiveness.
- Consider the impact on emotions.
- Consider plain language about deaths, injuries, and illnesses.
- Consider using simple, non-technical language.
- Consider using images that connect at a personal level.
- Consider stories that are culturally sensitive and make data come alive.
- Consider working with the public(s) by offering realistic, compliance-prone actions.
- Consider methods on intended audiences.
- Consider how to make the desired decision?
- Consider outcome and impact measures.
- Consider working with key participants?
- Consider the next intervention, the next steps?

Public Communication on Health and Risk Issues - Has a plan - Focus on People

Sources: Dr. Scott C. Ratzan, at *Global surveillance, Diagnosis and Therapy of human transmissible spongiform Encephalopathies: Report of a WHO Consultation*, World Health Organization, www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/bse/whoemczd1989.pdf

Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Europe

1. The main problem is that lay people are ignorant about scientific facts

2. Citizens are afraid of GMOs

3. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture

4. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because of the possibility of harming the poor in the Third World

5. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because they do not want to exercise their freedom of choice

6. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because they believe that GMOs are unnatural

7. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because they do not trust regulatory institutions

8. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because they believe that this is not reasonable

9. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because of "other - ethical or political - factors"

10. Citizens are afraid of GMOs used in food and agriculture because of the action of preparing sensationalist media

Source: *Public Perceptions of Agricultural Biotechnologies in Europe, Final Report of EC Funded Project: FAIR CT98-3844(DG12-SSM)*. Prof. Claire Marris et al.
An updated version of this table was presented by Prof. Marris at the Risk Perception conference organized by Directorate General for Health and Consumer Protection⁴.

life as capricious and attempts to control it as futile. In any case, however, recent research indicates that people rarely conform consistently to one of the four types exclusively, and their reaction to risk is multidimensional (Bennett, 2001).

In addition, attitudes towards social partners based on incorrect assumptions have to be revisited. The belief that the public cannot conceptualise uncertainty and that providing information about uncertainty would increase mistrust in science and scientific institutions has been challenged (Frewer and Salter, 2002). Similarly, the assumption that Europeans are technophobic is not supported by Eurobarometer studies (Gaskell, 2002). Recent work by C. Marris et al., funded by DG Research, analyses public perceptions of agricultural biotechnology in Europe, and discusses the effect that

such myths can have on policy formulation. (Box 2 lists 10 dominant stakeholder views/myths about the public response to GMOs).

Public attitudes to the scientific advice that constitutes the basis for the message being communicated have been changing (see the article by B. Duncan in this issue). The scientific advice processes are reviewed and efforts are made to establish assessment and monitoring criteria for the impact of scientific advice on policy formulation and on the interactions between the different social actors (Frewer and Salter, 2002 and *'The IPTS Report'*, issue 72)⁵.

Similarly the effect of these changing attitudes on regulatory processes is not to be ignored (see the article by F. Boudier in this issue).

Participatory Negotiation (talking with them, not to them)

1. The main aim is to reach a common position and supporting argumentation that characterises the groups

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