



EmerGent

Attitudes towards the use of social media by emergency services and citizens: initial findings from the FP7 EmerGent project

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EENA conference Bucharest, 22nd April 2015



Stadt Dortmund
Feuerwehr



The EmerGent project

- Emergency Management in Social Media Generation (EmerGent) is a FP7 project funded by the EU
- It aims to understand the positive and the negative impacts of social media in emergencies in order to:
 - (1) enhance objective and perceived safety and security of citizens in emergencies
 - (2) strengthen the role of European companies supplying relevant services and products
- It will develop:
 - guidelines for the use of social media by emergency services and citizens
 - tools to synthesise social media data for emergency services
 - an App for citizens to share information with emergency services during an emergency

Surveys of Emergency Staff and citizens

- Online survey of 696 emergency service staff across 27 countries (in Sept/Oct 2014)
- Online survey of citizens – 849 responses by mid-March 2015 (**ongoing**)
- Use of mainly closed questions to maximise response and generate statistical data
- Opportunity samples (not representative) – provide indicative findings

Characteristics of ES survey participants

- Largest number from Germany (223), Slovenia (130), Poland (109) and Denmark (65)
- Majority male (92%)
- Mixture of age groups – largest group aged 30-39 years old (29%)
- Majority working for Fire Departments (44%), Volunteer Fire Brigades (25%) or German ‘Technisches Hilfswerk’ (21%)
- Mixture of junior and more senior/supervisory level staff

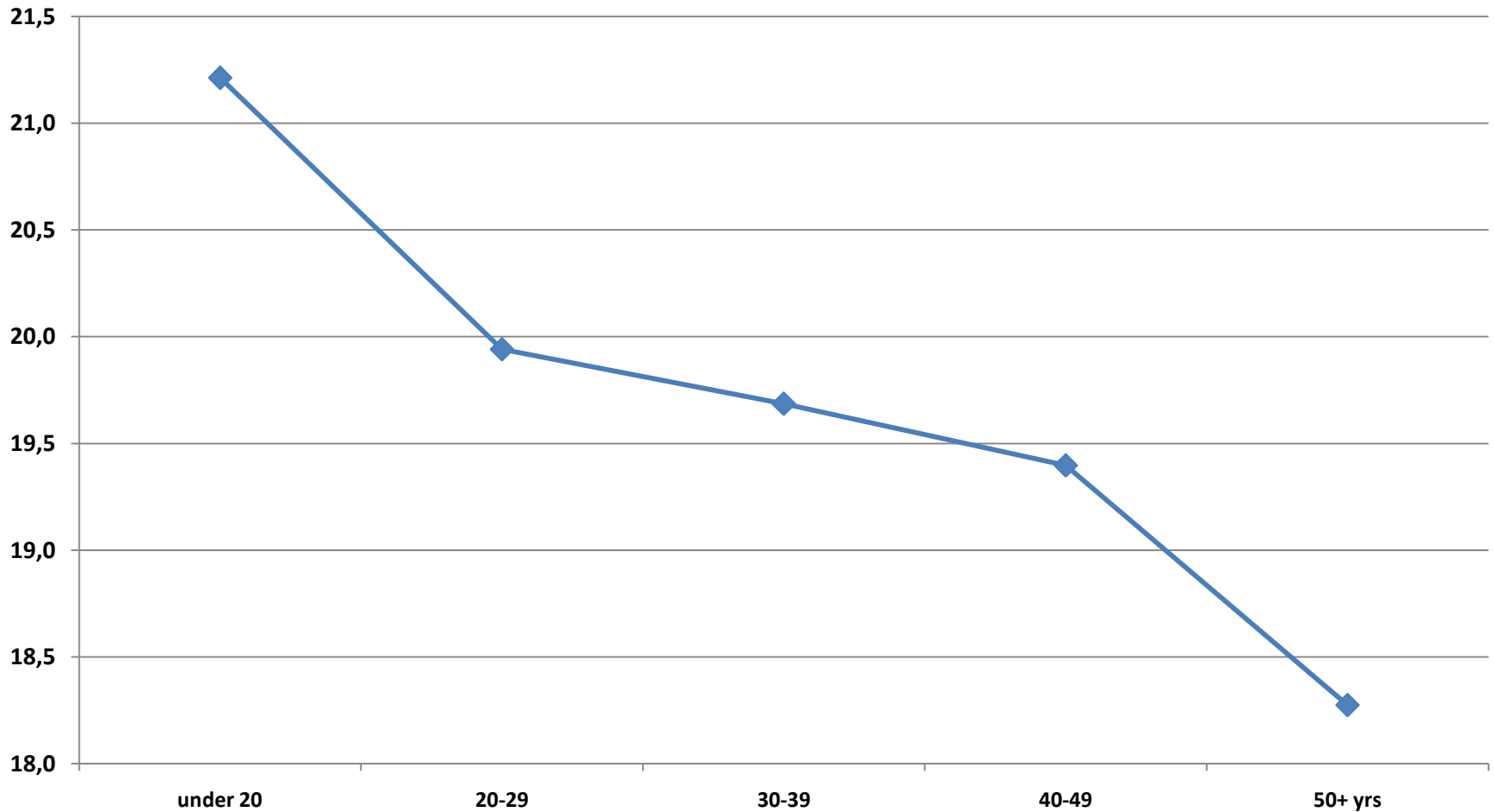
Attitude towards SM factor

- Based on 8 questionnaire items (Likert scale); for example:
 - In my private life I use SM very often
 - Information provided on social media during an emergency is often not reliable
 - Most of my friends use SM to keep in touch
 - Emergency services are too busy to use social media
- Max=40 (Positive attitude) – Min=5 (Negative attitude)

Attitudes towards Social Media

- Young ES staff were more positive towards using social media than older staff members

Attitude towards SM depending on age



Attitudes towards Social Media

- Young ES staff were more positive towards using social media than older staff members
- Female ES staff displayed more positive attitudes towards social media than their male counterparts
- ES staff in countries with high levels of social media use were, on average, more positive towards using social media

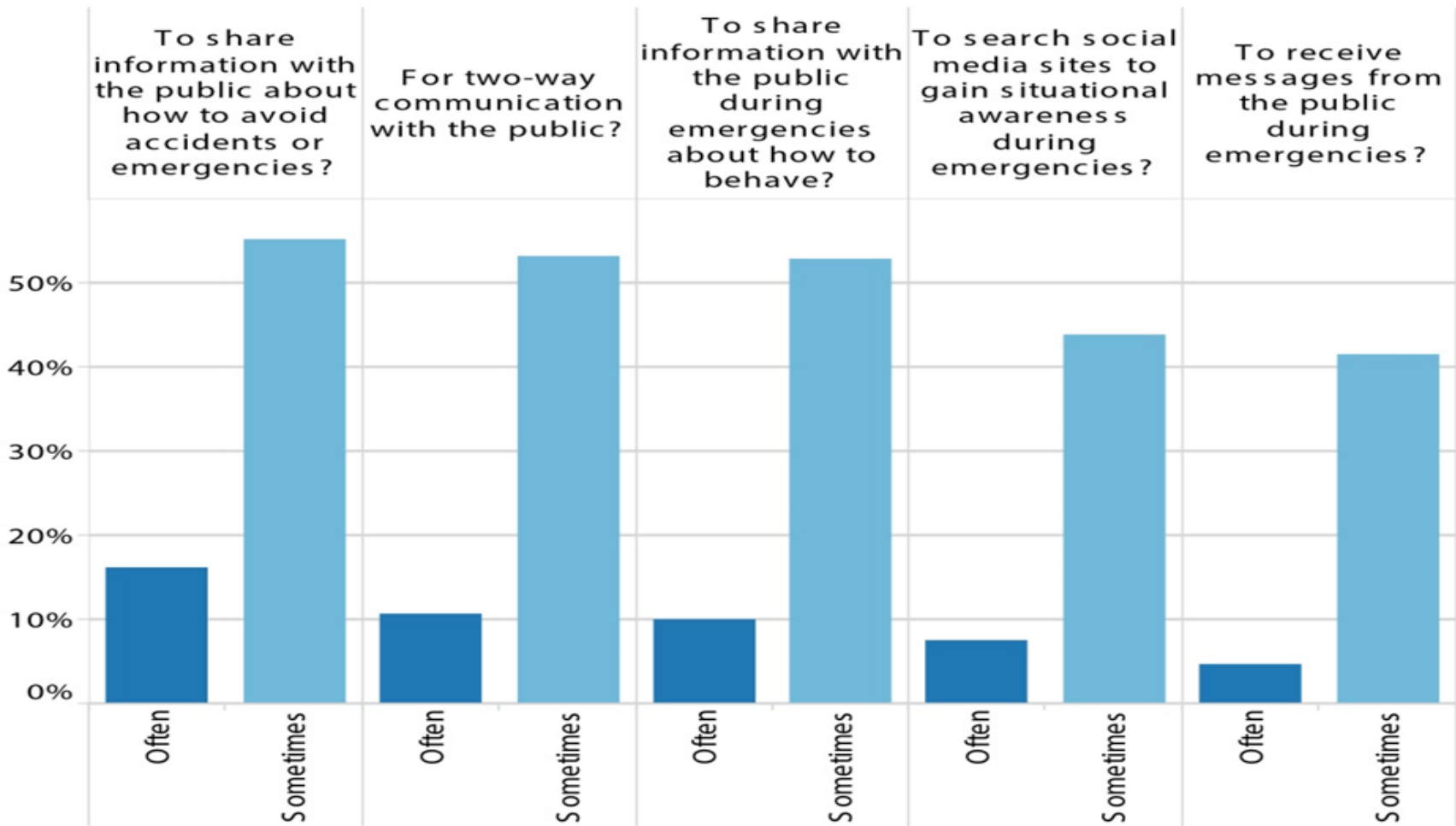
Positive attitude toward SM

“Social media are a valuable part in emergency organization [...] because they are quite useful to deliver information to the population as well as providing a wider scope of the situation. It should be a must to count on this channel because it helps to save lives and it is a very valuable tool in civil protection ... ”

More negative attitude toward SM

“Emergency Services must be very careful about using information received on social media during emergencies” Because: “Information may be inaccurate and may not be providing a sufficient overview of what is actually happening”.

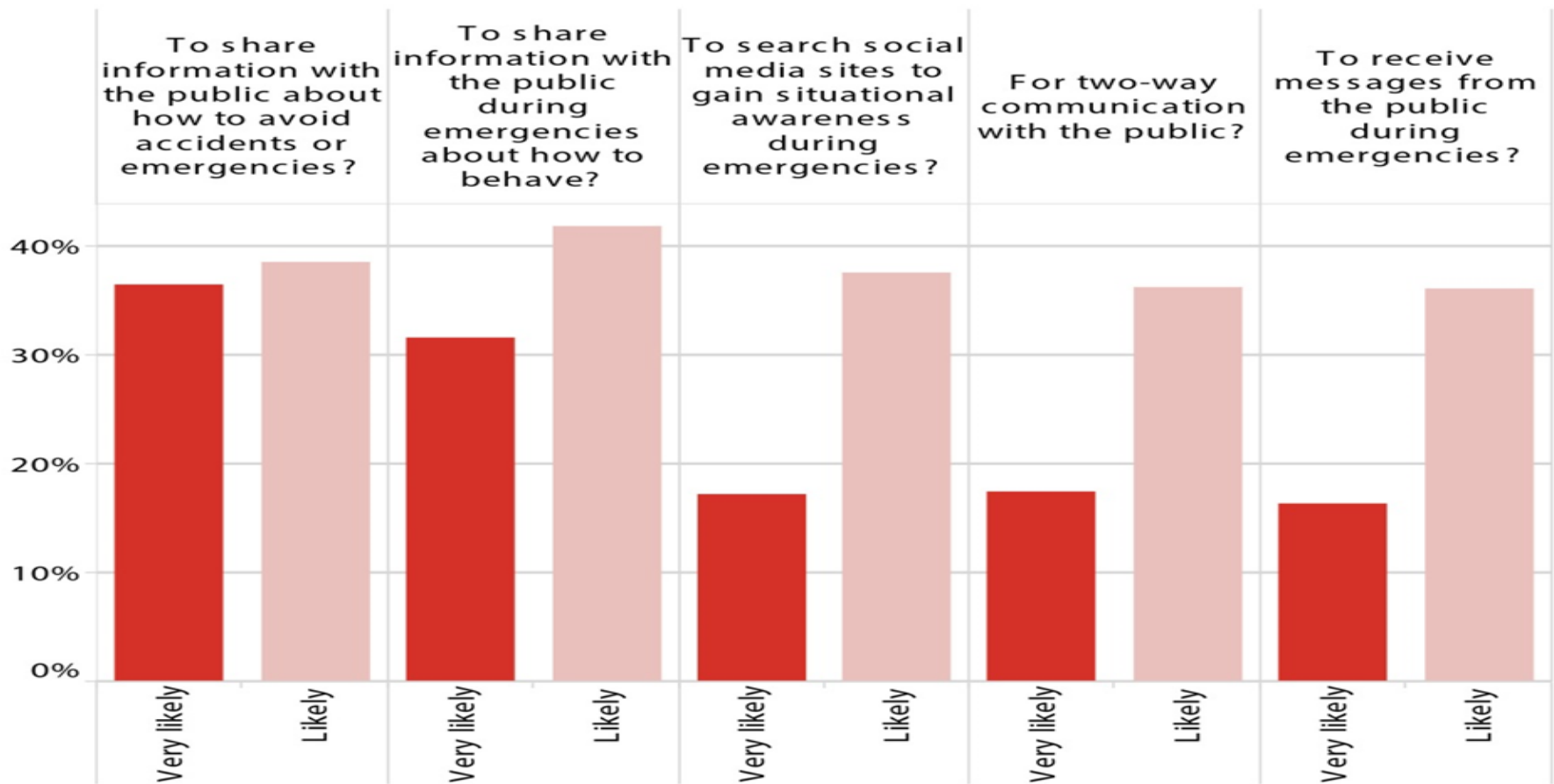
How frequently does your organisation currently use social media?



Main factors associated with use

- The main factors seen as enabling the use of social media by Emergency Services are seen to be staff skills (77% saw this as important or very important) and having an organizational culture open to the use of such information (79%).
- The factors which were deemed to be less important were 'funding for staff time' (18% thought this was 'very important'), the availability of equipment (24%) or software (23%) to access the data.
- Older staff (aged 30 to 49) were significantly more likely to see staff skills as important than younger staff (aged 29 or below)

Do you expect your organisation to increase its use of SM in future?



Characteristics of citizen survey participants

- About two-thirds (64%) aged 21-39
- About half male (51%) and female (48%)
- Most responses from Poland (244), Slovenia (169), UK (126), Germany (125), and Italy (50)
- 21% work or volunteer for an emergency service
- 13% do not use a mobile/smartphone – 30% of 50+s

Use of, and attitudes towards using, social media (SM) in emergencies

- Young people use SM significantly more
- But there is no difference by age with regard to attitudes towards using SM in emergencies
- Women use SM significantly more than men and also have a slightly more positive attitudes towards using SM in emergencies
- Those working for an ES use SM significantly more often – but there is no difference in attitude towards using SM in emergencies

Using SM to find out info

- 47% of participants have used SM **to find out information** during an emergency (n=397) and 50% thought they would do so again in future
- **Most** found out about: weather warnings (78%), road or traffic conditions (68%), damage caused by the event (65%), or to see eyewitness photos or videos (64%)
- **Least** used it to look for: information about how others are coping (37%), the location/status of friends/family (35%) and what to do to keep safe (34%)

Using SM to share info

- 34% have used SM **to share information** re. an emergency (=285 participants) – 52% thought they would do so in future
- **Most likely** to share: weather warnings (65%), road or traffic conditions (63%) or a photo (54%)
- **Least likely** to share: a video (24%), their location (22%), that they were safe (18%), what actions they were taking to stay safe (14%)
- **Otherwise** they shared: their feeling or emotions about what happened (38%), an eyewitness description (28%), advice about what others should do to stay safe (27%)

Conclusions

- There is a significant difference in attitudes towards SM among different groups of citizens and ES staff
- Most ES already use SM in some way – but it is not yet embedded in practice
- Currently, it is most of often used **by ES** to share information and **by citizens** to find out information
- There is an apparent gap though still in ES using citizen-generated SM data for situational awareness purposes
- However – the survey evidence suggests that this and other uses of SM are likely to increase in future.

Further information

- To get further information on the surveys, please contact: Thomas Spielhofer (t.spielhofer@tavinstitute.org) or Christian Reuter (Christian.Reuter@uni-siegen.de).
- For further details on the EmerGent project, please contact Therese Friberg, (friberg@cik.uni-paderborn.de)
- Or see: www.fp7-emergent.eu

Links to citizen survey

- ow.ly/KcED6 (English survey)
- bit.ly/1GnUUS2 (Link to surveys in other languages: Slovenian, Polish, German and Italian)