

SURVEY OF EMERGENCY SERVICE STAFF ATTITUDES TOWARDS SOCIAL MEDIA¹

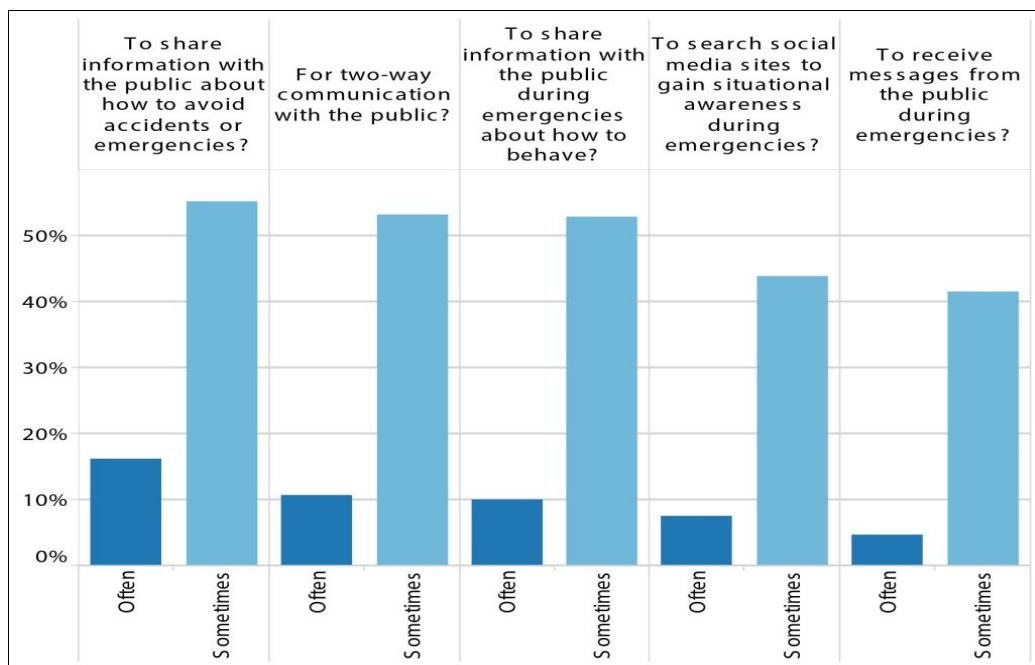
Summary Report

This is a summary report of the findings from a survey of 696 Emergency Service staff across 27 European countries conducted between 9th September and 15th October 2014. The main aims of the survey were to explore Emergency Service staff’s attitudes towards social media for private and organizational use and the levels and main factors influencing their current and likely future use of social media in their organizations. It was conducted as part of the Emergency Management in Social Media Generation (EmerGent) study (<http://www.fp7-emergent.eu/>).

Key findings

- The majority of Emergency Service staff have positive attitudes towards the use of social media for both private and organizational purposes
- However, there are significant differences in the attitudes among different types of Emergency Service staff, in terms of their gender, age, and geographical location – thus, female, young staff and those based in countries with high levels of social media use are, on average, significantly more likely to express positive attitudes towards the use of social media for both private and organizational purposes

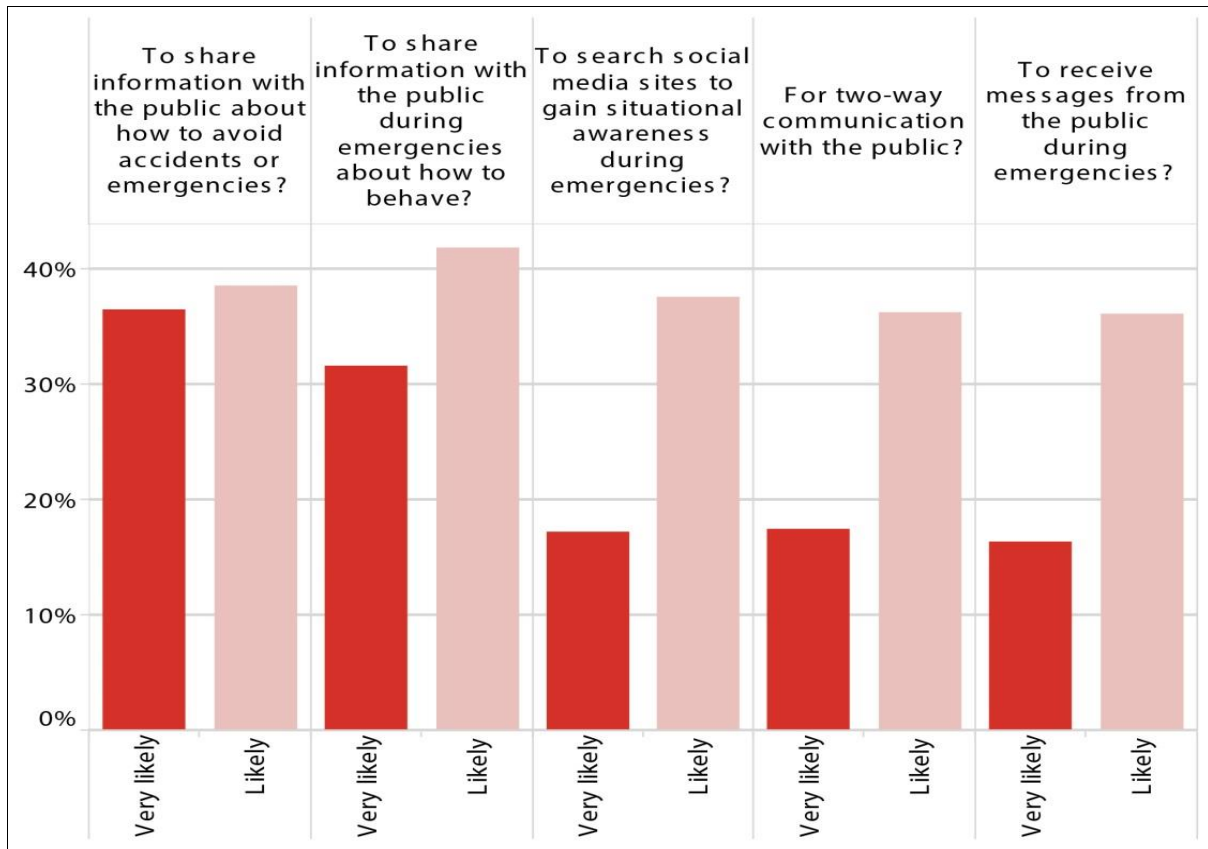
Figure 1: How frequently does your organization currently use social media?



¹ These results are extracted from: CHRISTIAN REUTER, SYLVIA PRATZLER-WANCZURA, THOMAS SPIELHOFER, DAVID DRABBLE (2014): *End-user based view on Potentials of Social Media Usage for EMS and citizens’ involvement in the EMC*. Deliverable of the EU FP7 Project EmerGent.

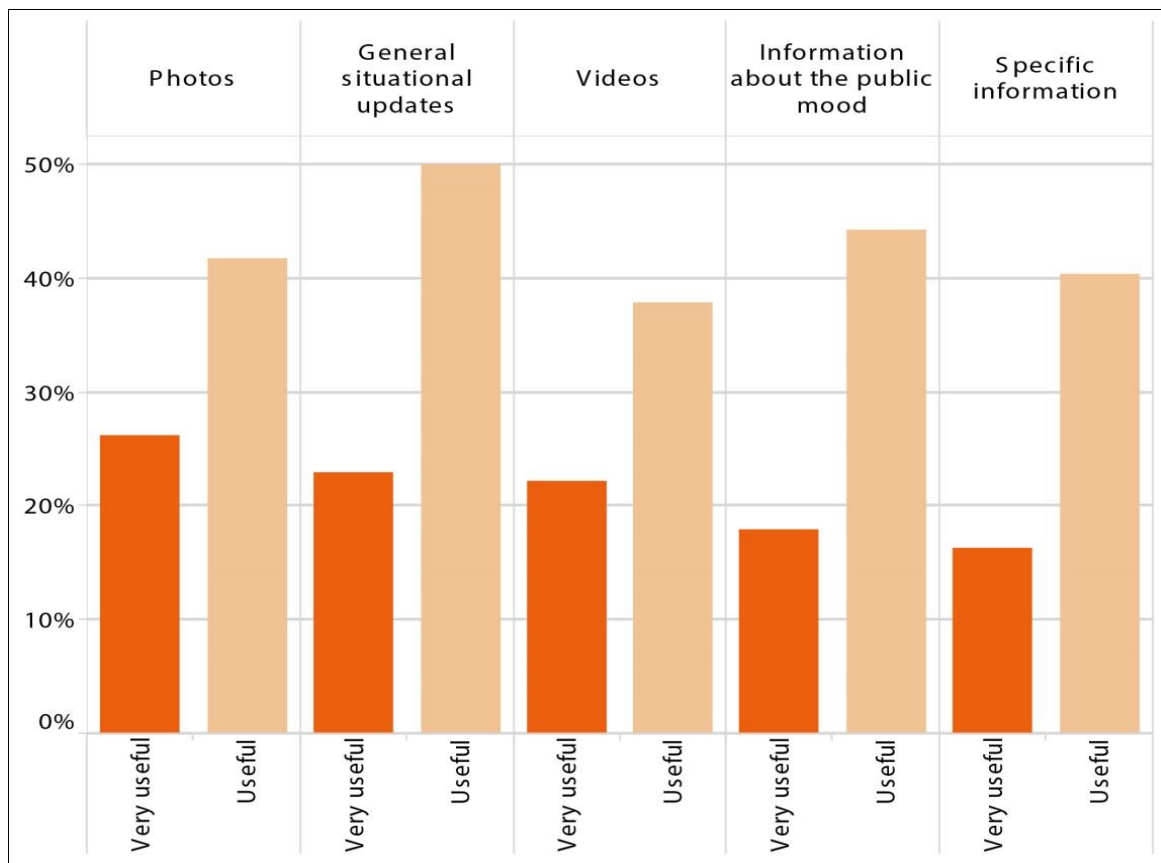
- Figure 1 above shows that more than 50% of survey participants use social media in various ways before and during emergencies at least sometimes; of these, they are currently most likely to use social media to share information with the public about how to avoid accidents or emergencies – however, only 16% of survey participants indicate that they do this often
- Figure 1 also shows that according to around half of survey participants, social media is used by their organizations to receive messages from the public during emergencies at least sometimes; but only for 5% this happens often in their organizations

Figure 2: Do you expect your organization to increase its use of social media in future?



- Figure 2 above, shows that the majority of Emergency Service staff expect their organizations to increase their use of social media in future, particularly in order to share information with the public about how to avoid accidents and how to behave during emergencies
- However, those Emergency Service staff already using social media often in their organizations are significantly more likely to indicate that they expect their organizations to increase their use of social media than other survey participants
- Figure 3 below indicates there were very little noticeable differences in the types of information shared on social media Emergency Services deem most useful. However, further analysis suggested that all types of information were most likely to be seen as useful by those who already used social media to receive or share information with the public often (or at least sometimes).

Figure 3: Views on usefulness of different types of information shared on social media



- 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 (50% thought this was 'important' and 29% 'very important' – 79% in total).
- 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.
- Further analysis of the data also suggested that older staff (aged 30 to 49) were significantly more likely to see staff skills as important than younger staff (aged 29 or below) in enabling their organizations to use social media – this could reflect the fact that older staff have lower confidence in the use of social media.



Methodology

At the start of September 2014, project partners sent out a link to the online survey to networks and various other national or international mailing lists, including for example the German Fire Service Association (DFV), Federation of the European Union Fire Officer Associations, EENA Emergency Services Staff Network (ESSN) and Slovenian Firefighters 112 Social Network. This means that the sample of Emergency Service staff responding to this survey are not fully representative, but are likely to be biased in favour of those types of staff who project staff were able to engage most easily.

Characteristics of survey participants

Survey responses were received from Emergency Service staff across 27 countries, with the largest number of respondents coming from Germany (223), Slovenia (130), Poland (109) and Denmark (65). The large majority of respondents (92%) were male, although the survey did include 54 female Emergency Service staff (8%). The largest proportion of respondents was aged 30-39 years old (29%) and the smallest aged less than 20 years old (6%), although, overall responses were fairly well distributed across age groups – with similar proportions of responses (around 20%) received from those aged 20-29, 40-49 and 50 years or older.

The majority of survey participants were working in full-time Fire Departments (44%), Volunteer Fire Brigades (25%) or the German Federal Agency for Technical Relief ('Technisches Hilfswerk') (21%). The remaining nine percent of participants included a relatively small number of staff working at Public Service Answering Points (PSAPs), for Emergency Medical Services, the Police, and other relevant organisations. The largest proportion of respondents described themselves as 'members of the crew' (32%), while 25% were Heads/Supervisors of their particular Emergency Service. This suggests that the survey achieved a good cross-section of senior as well as more junior and supervisory-level of staff.

Further information

To get further information on the survey, 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).

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