

EUROPEAN CITIZENS' PANEL



Preparedness

Final recommendations



Final recommendations

Topic 1: Communication

Recommendation 1.1: Accessible Differentiated Multi-Channel Warning Systems

Observation:

There are differences between the warning systems in the member states. These can affect the citizens receiving information, especially as there may be cross-border emergencies/crises. When the information is not given in a useful language, using channels that allow different citizens to get information (such as people with disabilities), or if the information given is not adequate for the concrete situation, is not helpful.

Assessment:

Even though the EU can only support the member states in some respects regarding warning systems, there is the need for coordination, especially as there may be crises that are cross-border and involve more than one member state. Learning from existing member states' warning systems can be useful, such as Austria's civil protection app and the self-broadcast system in several member states.

It is important that attention be put to the language used, the content, and the format of the warning system. Easy to understand signals could be useful in this objective. The warning system should also be responsive to the type of emergencies/crises and different groups of citizens (for example, people with disabilities). Additionally, some tools could help to ensure that citizens are informed even when there is no electricity.

Recommendation:

The EU and the member states should work to develop a warning system that is harmonised within the member states. They could learn from good practices on existing warning systems of the member states. This warning system should include information that is clear and easy to understand using colour codes (considering the risk, the areas affected, and if it is a recommendation or is mandatory). The content should also include the emergencies/crises that it is related to (for example, blackouts, earthquakes, fires, floods, and drones); the affected area; and instructions on what to do. It should also consider adjusting the information to the necessities of people with disabilities.

The warning system should be presented in different channels to reach as many citizens as possible. On the one hand, it should consider channels like mobile phone applications, social media platforms, SMS on the mobile phone, and national TV and radio. On the other hand, channels not related to digital technologies should also be included, such as sirens, megaphones, paper information and local resources that may vary from member state to member state. To make it possible that warning systems are available even when there is no electricity, tools such as generators or solar-powered power banks should be provided to local communities by governments with financial support from the EU.

Recommendation 1.2: A coordinated, multichannel approach to crisis preparedness communication

Observation:

Despite the availability of crisis preparedness information, it does not reach the population effectively. The challenge is not a lack of content, but a lack of targeted and well-designed delivery. Different groups are reached by different channels, and without a holistic approach, large segments of the population risk being left behind.

Three gaps are visible. First, current delivery mechanisms, such as postal leaflets, are unreliable and inconsistent across member states. Second, receiving information is not the same as acting on it; awareness alone does not change behaviour. Third, communication tends to be one-directional, with limited feedback loops to assess whether messages are landing. Apathy among the public remains a significant barrier.

Assessment:

Effective crisis communication requires more than making information available, it demands active citizen engagement. We assess that a passive communication strategy is insufficient. However, reaching disengaged populations is a genuine challenge, and shifting attitudes requires sustained effort, the right incentives, and culturally relevant messaging.

This points to a core tension: while EU-level coordination ensures consistency, the EU is not homogeneous, and centralised messaging risks feeling irrelevant to citizens in different national contexts. We therefore assess that standardisation, and localisation must go hand in hand, the EU should provide a common framework, but local authorities must own the delivery.

Recommendation:

The EU should direct member states to develop and communicate national advice on citizens' personal responsibilities in preparing for future crises. As a concrete measure, each member state should distribute a brochure to all households with practical guidance on how to cope independently for at least 72 hours in the event of a crisis.

While the directive comes from EU level, communication should be shaped and delivered by local authorities, ensuring messages feel trusted, relevant, and culturally appropriate.

Before a crisis, delivery should follow a bimodal, multichannel strategy covering risk communication:

Before a crisis, member states should implement three complementary channels:

- Door-to-door outreach targeting vulnerable groups such as the elderly and people with disability
- A locally delivered, EU-coordinated media system spanning TV, radio, and social media
- Paper-based communications left on people's doors or by mail.

Recommendation 1.3: Establishing and improving local on-site knowledge centres (distribution/information centres)

Observation:

There seems to be a need for more on-site centres where people can obtain information about crisis management. These centres may already exist in some cases, but information about them appears to be lacking. For example, there is little knowledge about the training activities they may offer. At the same time, we expect that in many EU Member States such centres do not yet exist, at least not in practice.

There are already other information centres in place on topics such as sustainability or within local town halls, which could serve as examples or points of integration. There also appears to be a general lack of transparency regarding how organisations deal with crises. During peacetime, or when crises feel far away, citizens are often unaware that crisis management structures and preparations are already in place. At the same time, considerable expert knowledge already exists and could be used more effectively in this context.

Assessment:

Knowledge centres are essential for bringing information closer to citizens in an accessible and approachable way, delivered by trusted people from their own communities. They also make it possible to support hard-to-reach groups, including people with disabilities and others who may face barriers in accessing information and assistance. In addition, knowledge centres play an important role in strengthening self-reliance. Their value extends beyond times of crisis, as they are equally supportive in the periods before and after a crisis. They provide reliable places where people can turn for guidance, support, and assistance whenever needed.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the European Union provides dedicated funding and support over different funding programmes for local multifunctional knowledge centres that serve as accessible and trusted community hubs for crisis preparedness, information-sharing, and public support.

These centres could distribute educational materials and preparedness kits, operate as walk-in information points, and provide practical simulations and exercises for different types of crises. They should also actively engage with communities through outreach activities, such as cooperation with local associations and door-to-door information campaigns. Regular rehearsals and awareness activities should form part of their role.

Implementation should reflect local contexts. In rural areas, existing public spaces such as municipal buildings or healthcare waiting rooms could serve this function, while urban areas may benefit from dedicated centres with broader accessibility.

Experts should support the centres to ensure reliable information is available during emergencies, while coordinators could receive guidance from relevant specialists. In addition, the centres should promote the use of digital applications for crisis information and alerts where such tools are available.

Recommendation 1.4: EU Crisis Preparedness Information Mechanism

Observation:

During previous crises, citizens were often exposed to fragmented or decentralised information coming from multiple EU, national, regional, and local authorities. Information was not always presented through a single trusted reference point, and guidance frequently lacked clear sourcing, references, or transparency regarding the evidence and authorities underpinning recommendations. This contributed to confusion, inconsistent interpretation of measures across Member States, and reduced public trust in crisis communication and emergency guidance.

Assessment:

Future crises will require stronger coordination to overcome the fragmentation, inconsistency, and mistrust experienced in previous emergencies. A centralized EU crisis preparedness information mechanism/tool could improve the accessibility, consistency, and transparency of crisis communication by providing citizens with a single trusted access point for reliable, verified, and up-to-date information, including when travelling within the EU. Clear identification of responsible authorities and sources would further strengthen public trust.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the EU should establish a centralised crisis preparedness information mechanism/tool providing Member States and citizens with reliable, verified, and up-to-date information during emergencies and crises. The mechanism/tool should function as a single repository where citizens can quickly access essential information and understand how authorities reached their conclusions, including the level of justification relevant to their country or region, as well as when travelling abroad within the EU.

The mechanism/tool should include dedicated sections, enabling citizens to select their current location and access official guidance related to emergencies such as natural disasters, public health crises, or security threats etc. In the event of an emergency or crisis, citizens should be able to quickly access verified information, including safety instructions, emergency contacts, alerts, and practical guidance, through a single trusted access point.

To strengthen trust and accessibility, information should be clearly sourced from verified public authorities and emergency services, ensuring transparency, consistency, and coordination across Member States. All information should be centralised at the EU level and included in clear sources, references, and identification of the responsible authorities or organisations providing the information.

Topic 2: Information integrity

Recommendation 2.1: Advance critical thinking in education

Observation:

More opportunities need to exist for people to learn about critical thinking, disinformation, and being resilient. Resilience in the context of education refers to the ability of an individual to engage critically with the information presented. The local level is vital in this endeavour (Preparedness Day in Denmark for example).

Assessment:

Different target groups require different avenues of engaging with the topics of critical thinking and preparedness. Different age groups are at different points in their lives, and a strategic approach is necessary to make sure that they are included. Children, teens and students can engage with such content in schools and universities, adults could benefit from trainings at the workplace, and senior citizens could enjoy the help of civil society organisations at the local levels (municipality for example).

Recommendation:

Identification of trustworthy sources is crucial in crisis. There are incentives needed for seniors, pensioners, etc., and they should benefit from the opportunity to upgrade their skills when it comes to critical thinking. Activities of an educational nature should be based on participation. Training should take place at local level, perhaps together with civil society organisations and state actors. Schools, universities are the primary places where this is relevant. Regular and continuous efforts are required to make sure that preparedness remains a relevant topic.

Recommendation 2.2: Tackling disinformation/false information to be prepared

Observation:

In the context of preparedness, disinformation and misinformation add a layer of chaos which has the potential to spiral and create continuous panic. As such, actors who propagate these types of information should be held accountable, for example by being banned for a period of time from the platforms used to spread their messages.

Assessment:

Social Media platforms should be held accountable for breaches of existing regulations like the Digital Services Act.

Recommendation:

Fighting against disinformation is a vital state function. The EU facilitates this in the member states, for best practices, to learn from each other, and to ensure that breaches are sanctioned. Big tech platforms are held accountable for breaches of existing regulations like the Digital Services Act. Citizens are also identifying false information on the platforms.

Recommendation 2.3: Strengthening transparency and Fact-Checking verification

Observation:

Citizens increasingly struggle to assess the reliability and credibility of online information sources, particularly in digital environments where AI-generated content, misinformation, and manipulated media are rapidly expanding.

Assessment:

The absence of clear and harmonised transparency indicators across platforms makes it difficult for citizens to identify trustworthy publishers, companies, official representatives, authorities, and understand the origin of information, and independently verify content.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the EU should support and strengthen mechanisms that help citizens identify and assess misinformation through transparent systems integrated into existing digital services. Such a fact-checking mechanism should rely on free, independent and trustworthy organisations. However, there is a clear need to improve the visibility and accessibility of existing fact-checking organisations, ensuring citizens are aware of and can easily find these resources.

Citizens should be supported in conducting their own factchecking by having access to practical mechanisms/tools that allow them to verify the source of information independently.

Topic 3: Inclusion

Recommendation 3.1: Standardised and universal visual and auditory signal identification

Observation:

The need to establish a harmonised language for crises across EU countries and ensure that everyone (regardless of their language, access to information etc) has access to this information.

Assessment:

An awareness exercise improves the sense of security. If I am abroad, I want to feel like I have a full understanding of what to do, where to look, and where to go in case of need. Citizens should be able to look at a symbol in any European city and be able to recognise what does it corresponds to.

Recommendation:

The Citizen's Panel recommends that the European Union establishes and encourages all member states to adopt a transversal and horizontal European symbol system to signal points of interest in case of crisis. To ensure the full inclusion of all categories (people with disabilities, older people, people with low income etc...), this language should integrate the use of pictograms, a color-coding system, and a sound system. Citizens should be instructed with clear guidelines to detect this language.

Recommendation 3.2: Universal and unified design to deliver information related to crisis

Observation:

There is a high percentage of individuals considered as 'vulnerable', that have higher chances of suffering bigger consequences to a crisis. We must encourage the Commission to make sure that all individuals feel supported and have the right quality and amount of information they need to react to crisis.

Assessment:

Having a universal EU framework on how information is delivered would contribute to making sure that all individuals feel included and have equal opportunities in reacting to crises. As a society, we are moving towards a stronger awareness around the gap that exists in the way individuals made vulnerable can access information.

Recommendation:

In the delivery of information, the Citizens' Panel highlights the need to develop a unified EU framework that can be adapted into more tailored local approaches enacted by local authorities. The strategy should aim to ensure the effective dissemination of information to people with disabilities and their support networks, enabling them to prepare adequately for and respond to different types of crises. It should also ensure that the general population is informed about the specific measures they can adopt to support all people in the event of a crisis.

Recommendation 3.3: Engagement of Local Organizations in the Coordination of Distribution of 72h Kits for Vulnerable Individuals

Observation:

Considering that 72-hour kits are implemented and popularised differently across the EU, insufficient involvement of local actors is evident in some regions. There is limited understanding of who the vulnerable individuals in our societies are, what support they need and how to reach them in times of crisis.

Citizens often lack knowledge of who would support them in accessing 72-hour kits and what assistance is offered.

Assessment:

Certain citizens may be prevented from acquiring a kit due to financial vulnerability, age, or disabilities. When a crisis arises, it is important that these kits are offered to vulnerable groups across the EU. Collaboration with local organisations and communities should be encouraged in order to identify individuals who are unable to acquire a kit themselves. In a crisis, local organisations can cater to different vulnerable groups in their community.

National organisations (e.g. organisations representing people with disabilities) should provide general guidelines for the specific needs of certain groups.

Recommendation:

The EU should ensure that the 72-hour kit is readily available to financially and health-vulnerable citizens and should offer the kit directly to those in need when a crisis arises.

The EU should support local initiatives that identify vulnerable individuals in their communities and provide them with support and kits in both financial and legal matters. These initiatives should encourage regional authorities to use their local knowledge to assist households facing difficulties organising their 72-hour kits.

These initiatives should involve local authorities, as well as civil society organisations such as non-governmental organisations, civil society associations, churches and other voluntary groups, to bridge the gap between different stakeholders and build public trust.

Topic 4: Self-sufficiency

Recommendation 4.1: Autonomous energy production and storage in the European Union

Observation:

The EU remains highly dependent on third countries for energy supplies. In times of crisis, this dependency can lead to rising prices, supply shortages (e.g. Strait of Hormuz), and increased economic and geopolitical vulnerability. There are already EU funded programs for photovoltaics that can be implemented locally/ individually.

Assessment:

This dependency is a significant challenge for the European Union. Reliance on external actors for essential resources such as energy services weakens the EU's resilience, strategic independence, and capacity to respond effectively to crises. The panel believes that strengthening European autonomy is essential to ensure stability, affordability, security, and long-term sustainability for EU citizens.

Recommendation:

The EU should focus on energy autonomy from third countries e.g. autonomy from Russian/US gas and oil from the Middle East. Partnerships should always focus on the EU's political interests e.g. currently, partnerships with Canada and Australia on energy matters seem beneficial following the example of Mercosur on agricultural products. This autonomy can be achieved by diversifying its sources through investments in solar panels on public buildings and wind turbines. In order to make these investments efficient, the EU should register the current energy needs/shortages in the Member States as well as document production costs and market prices so that there is transparency and price gouging is eliminated. Apart from the production of energy, storage of energy is also crucial. For this reason, the EU should fund research for energy storage. However, it is important to become equally independent for the rare earth materials needed for the production of e.g. batteries. Otherwise, we move dependence from one sector to another. Moreover, in order to achieve smarter energy grids, the EU should take initiative to reduce bureaucracy on private energy investments.

Recommendation 4.2: Prioritising food supplies from within the EU

Observation:

Locally produced goods are often more expensive than imported alternatives, even when citizens would prefer to support regional products and local producers. This can discourage sustainable consumption and weaken local production systems.

Assessment:

The Panel considers that the current market situation does not sufficiently support local and national production within EU Member States. Dependence on large-scale external supply chains can reduce economic resilience and undermine local industries, agriculture, and small producers. Affordable access to regional products and stronger local production systems can contribute to sustainability, food security, and economic stability.

Recommendation:

The EU should strengthen food sovereignty and better support local producers. The Panel calls for regulation that gives EU products a fair competitive footing by ensuring the efficient, practical implementation of the 'Protected Designation of Origin' designation on agricultural products, preventing imported goods from undercutting domestic/EU producers. This should be paired by promoting incentivising the shortening of supply chains because if there are less middlemen there are less chances that the margin of prices increases. Moreover, the EU should have lower VAT and lower administrative burdens for small local producers.

Recommendation 4.3: Development of a safe digital EU infrastructure

Observation:

The European Union remains highly dependent on third countries for critical digital infrastructure and technologies. This includes reliance on foreign banking and payment systems, cloud services, social media platforms, and emerging artificial intelligence technologies, particularly from the United States and China. In times of geopolitical tension or crisis, such dependency can increase economic vulnerability, weaken strategic autonomy, and expose sensitive European/personal data to external risks.

Assessment:

The EU's dependence on non-European digital infrastructure poses significant risks to privacy and security. There is a concern that personal and strategic data handled by foreign digital companies may be misused, transferred, or accessed without sufficient legal safeguards for European citizens. While the EU has established strong data protection standards through its regulatory framework, including strict privacy and data protection rules, these protections may be difficult to enforce effectively when data and digital services are controlled by companies based outside the EU. The Panel believes that strengthening the EU's digital capacities is essential to ensure trust and transparency in the digital environment.

Recommendation:

The EU should significantly increase funding for research and development in digital infrastructure and emerging technologies. Priority should be given to the creation and expansion of EU-based digital systems, including cloud infrastructure, artificial intelligence technologies, payment systems, communication platforms, and social media networks. The Panel also recommends supporting European companies in developing secure and competitive digital solutions that comply fully with EU data protection and cybersecurity standards.

Recommendation 4.4: EU-wide Guidelines on 72h Kits' Components

Observation:

The implementation of the 72-hour kits varies greatly across the EU. In some member states, the kit is practically invisible, while in others, it has been clearly implemented and awareness of it has been raised.

Citizens have a limited understanding of the necessity and components of such a survival kit due to a lack of education and guidance in this area.

Assessment:

Implementation and communication of the 72-hour emergency kit is insufficient across the EU and action is needed. The significant differences between member states lead to confusion regarding the role of the kits and their place in a broader preparedness strategy. It is unclear whether citizens or the state is responsible for securing basic needs in acute crises. Links to general communication efforts on preparedness and educational systems, where children could engage with the kits, are also lacking.

Recommendation:

In times of crisis, the 72-hour emergency kit should ensure basic survival, cater to individual basic needs, and respond to local threats for 72 hours. The kit should be clearly communicated as a part of a larger preparedness strategy.

The EU should establish a prioritised standard categorisation of kit contents, providing broad guidelines for Member States and local authorities in this area. These categories should be consistent across Member States, although the specific contents may differ. First and foremost, the contents of the kit should be defined by the need to ensure basic survival, such as access to water. Secondly, the kit should address individual survival needs, like medicine, followed by the regional threat landscape.

Survival should be defined as access to water, food and heat. It should encourage citizens to be informed and prepared for individual survival. Lastly, the contents of the kit should be defined through collaboration with local crisis responders in light of local threats.

Recommendation 4.5: Improving coordination while having local sovereignty in place

Observation:

Regions and municipalities are essential in crisis management; they have their own network structures, with organisations already possessing specific knowledge, for example knowing where people with specific needs or disabilities live and what their needs are. In many cases, crisis information is currently also communicated top-down, but the essence lies in rapid local action, and improvements in coordination may be needed.

Coordination between organisations already exists to a certain extent, but it is not always comprehensive. There appears to be a coordination gap between local networks and organisations on the one hand and authorities on the other. Depending on the country or region, crisis management actions may be carried out either by public authorities or by NGOs.

There is already some knowledge available on how local networks function and how these best practices operate. However, there are significant differences between countries, and even within countries themselves, in terms of how systems and responsibilities are organised. This should be clearly taken into account. Local trusted coordinators, such as mayors, play a major role in crisis management.

Assessment:

It is important to address the coordination gap in order to strengthen local action and improve cooperation among all relevant organisations, while making the best possible use of top-down information and guidance. Achieving this on an EU-wide scale is challenging due to the significant differences between regions. Therefore, a decentralised approach with strong local adaptation is essential.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the EU issues a directive establishing organisational principles for stronger local crisis coordination. This should improve both vertical coordination between national, regional, and local levels of government, and horizontal coordination among different public authorities and organisations.

The directive should support local authorities through targeted funding, guidance, and information-sharing, while building on existing local networks, governance structures, and trusted communication channels. At the same time, it should preserve local autonomy, allowing communities the flexibility to respond according to their specific national and regional contexts.

While strengthening the local level is essential, the EU should also facilitate effective cross-border coordination to ensure coherent responses to crises that extend beyond national boundaries.

Topic 5: Engagement

Recommendation 5.1: Strengthening volunteer work

Observation:

In times of crisis, volunteers are essential for supporting communities and emergency responses, as they are often the first people on the ground in times of a crisis. However, effective crisis response also requires trained professionals and coordinators who can organise, guide, and support volunteers. Local communities need well-organised networks consisting of volunteers, municipalities, civil society organisations, and emergency responders such as firefighters and the Red Cross.

Many citizens are willing to help during crises, but there are insufficient opportunities to engage in volunteering beforehand, and they are not properly publicised. The process of becoming a volunteer is often unclear or overly complicated. Time constraints related to work and family responsibilities also discourage participation.

Schools, municipalities, and local organisations currently do not promote volunteering and preparedness equally across all regions and age groups. At the same time, volunteers often lack recognition, practical support, and incentives for their contribution.

Assessment:

There is a need for a more accessible, coordinated, and long-term approach to volunteer recruitment and retention across the EU. Citizens should be encouraged to register as volunteers in advance through simple and accessible procedures managed by local non-governmental organisations or authorities. Pre-registration would also improve preparedness, coordination, and insurance coverage during crises.

Volunteering should be promoted as a long-term civic contribution rather than only an emergency response. Municipalities and local organisations play an important role in building trusted community networks that can respond quickly in times of crisis.

Family, work obligations and financial barriers currently limit participation in volunteering. These barriers should be kept as low as possible.

Schools, public and private organisations should play an important role in promoting preparedness and volunteering among citizens (and especially young people) through practical activities and cooperation with local emergency organisations.

EU-wide recognition of volunteers is essential for sustaining long-term engagement and motivation.

Recommendation:

We recommend that the European Commission strengthens logistical and financial support for volunteer organisations, preparedness training, and voluntary emergency responders, including firefighters and local civil society organisations. To implement this, we recommend using an EU fund.

We recommend that the European Commission encourage Member States to introduce practical support measures for volunteers in times of crisis, including insurance coverage, reimbursement of travel and food costs, and flexible working arrangements.

We recommend promoting volunteering, preparedness training and practical cooperation with local emergency organisations more widely using a multi-channel approach involving social media, public

spaces, and public authorities. However, information and awareness-raising alone are insufficient. We also recommend bringing organisations and citizens together. For instance, local organisations could visit schools and other public and private organisations to share insights on volunteering and crisis preparedness. This could encourage more people to get involved.

We recommend that the European Commission establishes common EU-level recognition mechanisms for volunteers. These could include an EU volunteer card offering discounts and tax advantages, as well as credit points (ECTS) for students in the University and certificates acknowledging contributions to volunteering across Member States.

Recommendation 5.2: European Preparedness Week

Observation:

Preparedness education and crisis-related information are often delivered through theoretical approaches that may limit engagement and practical understanding. Existing preparedness activities are not always adapted to different age groups, local environmental risks, or the needs of vulnerable groups. At the same time, preparedness initiatives are frequently fragmented and disconnected from local communities, existing organisations, and practical learning environments. Additionally, crisis communication for children is often not adapted to their level of understanding. There is no dedicated EU-wide initiative to actively engage citizens in crisis awareness and preparedness.

Assessment:

A community-based Preparedness Day/Week could strengthen practical preparedness skills, improve awareness of crisis response mechanisms, and encourage cooperation between educational institutions, local authorities, civil society organisations, experts, and communities. Interactive and experiential approaches to preparedness education may contribute to greater engagement and retention of knowledge, particularly among children and young people. Adapting preparedness activities to regional risks and local realities could also improve their relevance and effectiveness.

Recommendation:

Introduce a European Preparedness Week that is held annually. The EU should provide a broad overarching framework for it which is to be developed further and adapted by Member States at the national level.

Emphasize on communication and marketing to engage the public and media, complemented with merchandise elements, additional to traditional ways of sharing information. The Commissioners should participate in these campaigns. Prior to such Week (based on existing good practice), pilot projects should be carried out in schools to test approaches. Ensure reusing the outcomes for a broader implementation during the Preparedness Week.

Organize competitions that actively involve both children and parents or caregivers. Additionally, invite professionals to educational institutions to present their experiences in crisis management. During the Preparedness Week, activities should begin with age-appropriate exercises designed for preschool children and expand into initiatives tailored to needs of different age and vulnerable groups.

Recommendation 5.3: Local Citizens' Panels for Crisis Preparedness

Observation:

Very few people are getting involved in crisis preparedness, since many see crisis preparedness as distant from them. People don't believe a crisis will really happen until it actually happens. A lot of people do want to contribute but they don't know how. Many people are not aware of the crises we will be facing. People also don't see clear roles or clear results of getting involved. This leads to people being sceptical about getting involved in crisis preparedness.

We observe that in some of our countries some parts of the population have a lack of trust towards authorities, such as politicians or municipal officials. At the same time, we also recognise that in many cases there is often a lot more trust towards local authorities than national authorities due to proximity.

Assessment:

It is important that citizen engagement mechanisms have a concrete impact. This will help establish trust in authorities and these forms of citizen engagement. Clear structure and purpose for citizen engagement is needed for it to work properly.

Recommendation:

Organise local citizens' panels on crisis preparedness. Local citizens' panels should be regular with a purpose to prepare for or evaluate crisis management. There will also be the possibility of calling for an extraordinary assembly during an ongoing crisis. Each panel should have a specific topic.

Methodology for the panel can be adapted to the local context. The representativeness of the panel should be ensured so that it includes the whole society without discrimination. The panel should mirror the diversity of the society. Random selection can be used to ensure the representativeness, but also other methods can be considered.

Make sure the panel serves the general interest and commits to the principles of inclusion, transparency, shared respect, equality and respect of fundamental rights. Make sure that no actor involved in the panel would benefit financially from it.

The panel is co-organised with local authorities with local associations and organisations involved with the topic of the panel. The associations also serve as field expertise along with other experts on the topics.

The panel has an advisory mandate. Their recommendations will be received by local authorities who will follow-up in a transparent manner on how the recommendations are implemented. If the recommendations are not implemented, the authorities have to explain the reason why.

We recommend wide-spread communication and media engagement to involve a wider part of the society with crisis preparedness and with the implementation of the recommendations. There should be support of local EU networks behind the communication efforts. Panel members will be given a mandate to act as ambassadors for the work of the panel to raise awareness.

Ensure that engagement in the panel is relevant to the daily life realities and not too academic in terms of language and concepts. It is important to remember that citizen engagement should also be a source of fun and a social activity.

Topic 6: Education

Recommendation 6.1: Lifelong preparedness education starting from preschool age

Observation:

Across many EU countries education is theory-based and fragmented by subject in the curriculum. The regular curriculum lacks a basis for prevention, psychological preparedness, and resilience. Discussions around preparedness often fail to sufficiently address gender-related perspectives and lack activities tailored to both young adults, older people and persons with disabilities. People also lack training and practical activities on how to assist and support persons with disabilities during crisis and emergency situations.

Assessment:

Children lack practical skills related to risks to their safety in situations of crisis. Child-centred methods of education have a better chance to strengthen resources in an engaging, motivating way, turning school into a 'living lab' where children can explore and build their skills and competencies. After children leave school, opportunities to further develop preparedness skills can continue in other, specific local environments, such as workplaces etc.

Recommendation:

Crisis and preparedness education should start from preschool age (around 4 years old) through age-appropriate and engaging methods such as games, play-based learning, simulations, storytelling, and immersive activities. Initial activities should use non-digital approaches, while progressively integrating digital tools from age 6 onwards, adapted to children's level of understanding.

Preparedness education should take place both within and outside educational institutions, involving educational staff, parents or caregivers. Introduce a short, weekly preparedness lesson into regular school curricula. Develop activities in cooperation with local community and civil society actors such as the Red Cross and other NGOs and include first aid exercises, preparedness contests, peer-support initiatives. Apply recognition systems such as certificates or badges to encourage participation and long-term engagement.

Pay particular attention to inclusive preparedness practices, including awareness of mobility aids, compensatory tools, and support measures for persons with physical, psychological, and/or learning disabilities.

Promote clear and age-appropriate information, considering children's emotional reactions to emergencies, while ensuring access to appropriate psychological support and resilience-building measures.

Recommendation 6.2: Fair and Sustainable Funding for Emergency Preparedness Education

Observation:

There are currently significant inequalities between schools and between different regions in terms of resources and capacity to implement emergency preparedness education programmes. In addition,

the integration of these programmes into education systems remains uneven and insufficiently funded.

Assessment:

Effective emergency preparedness is an essential component of the resilience of citizens and societies. Without adequate and equitable funding, some populations risk being excluded from these fundamental forms of learning, thereby reinforcing social and territorial inequalities. Investing early and continuously in these programmes also helps build a shared culture of preparedness and civic responsibility.

Recommendation:

Citizens recommend securing dedicated and sustainable funding for crisis preparedness education, with strict controls to ensure funds are used effectively and for their intended purpose, with safety nets to ensure compliance. Spending must prioritise lifelong, age-appropriate and socially diverse training - created by experts - tailored to member states' own national risks and accessible to all in a straightforward manner. Allocation of funding should be proportionate to population and crisis exposure in harmony with European solidarity and equal treatment, while allowing for both local and European adaptation. Preparedness education should be recognised as a strategic investment and financed through defence budgets, reflecting the close link between population preparedness and overall European security. Clear accountability, predefined spending plans and collaborative expert inputs must ensure all funding is tracked, targeted and results driven.

Voting results

The citizens voted their support for each recommendation on a scale from 1 (low support) to 6 (high support). Additionally, the option to actively select "abstain from vote" was given to them.

This table displays the average level of support for each recommendation.

No.	Title	Average (1-6):
1.1	Accessible Differentiated Multi-Channel Warning Systems	5.0
1.2	A coordinated, multichannel approach to crisis preparedness communication	4.6
1.3	Establishing and improving local on-site knowledge centres (distribution/information centres)	4.8
1.4	EU Crisis Preparedness Information Mechanism	4.9
2.1	Advance critical thinking in education	4.5
2.2	Tackling disinformation/false information to be prepared	4.7
2.3	Strengthening transparency and Fact-Checking verification	4.5
3.1	Standardised and universal visual and auditory signal identification	5.1
3.2	Universal and unified design to deliver information related to crisis	4.8
3.3	Engagement of Local Organizations in the Coordination of Distribution of 72h Kits for Vulnerable Individuals	4.7
4.1	Autonomous energy production and storage in the EU	4.9
4.2	Prioritising food supplies from within the EU	5.0
4.3	Development of a safe digital EU infrastructure	4.9
4.4	EU-wide Guidelines on 72h Kits' Components	4.6
4.5	Improving coordination while having local sovereignty in place	4.7
5.1	Strengthening volunteer work	5.0
5.2	European Preparedness Week	4.1
5.3	Local Citizens' Panels for Crisis Preparedness	4.9
6.1	Lifelong preparedness education starting from preschool age	5.1
6.2	Fair and Sustainable Funding for Emergency Preparedness Education	5.1