Newsletter
№. 3
2026, May

Warning Communication Knowledge Network

AlertHub

COST ACTION 23126

In this number

Moving foward

AlertHub is gaining strong momentum. Our Working Groups have made meaningful progress, with members presenting their work and first results at major international conferences this year.

At the same time, we have established valuable partnerships and launched a series of online talks featuring leading experts including lively and productive discussions—just a few highlights of what this community has achieved so far.

Yet, this is only the beginning. A central task ahead is to translate our research into practice: making knowledge accessible, strengthening engagement with stakeholders, and supporting the implementation and adaptation of best practices in warning communication.

As we move forward, we look forward to deepening collaborations and building on the shared commitment of our members—to improve warning systems and ultimately reduce harm from extreme weather events.

Florian Meissner & Corina Buzoianu
Action Chair & Action Vice-Chair

Our Network

Members	MC Members	WG1 Members	WG4 Members
177	54	74	93

Countries	Board Members	WG2 Members	WG3 Members
45	14	107	60

Upcoming

AlertConversations

May 20, 2026
17:00 CET

with **Cari E. Guittard** and **Ryan Reynolds** (United States)

July 22, 2026
14:00 CET

with **Mario Antonius Birowo** (Indonesia)

Online

July 8-10, 2026

AlertHub Training School

Data Collection and Analysis with Large Language Models (LLM)

Zurich, Switzerland

Bucharest, May 11-12, 2026

Joint workshop on Science Communication (Young Researchers & WG4)

May 26-29,2026

AlertHub panel at SRA-E 2026 Advancing Risk Science for a Safer and Fairer Future

Alicante, Spain

Sep 8-11, 2026

AlertHub panel at the 11th European Communication Conference (ECREA)

Brno, Czech Republic

5th Main Assembly

The next AlertHub Main Assembly will take place on **June 18-19, 2026**, at the University of Beira Interior, Covilhã, Portugal. Invitations will be sent soon.

alerthub@comunicare.ro

WG Updates

Organized into four complementary Working Groups (WGs), the AlertHub project aims to map existing practices, identify implementation challenges, develop accessible knowledge resources, and ensure the effective dissemination of best practices within the European civil protection community. These coordinated activities position AlertHub as a central hub for advancing research, policy, and practice in disaster communication and warning systems, contributing to a more resilient and better-informed European society. Stay updated on the progress of the WGs:

WG1

Mapping extant data and research on disaster communication and warning systems in Europe

WG1 developed an optimized agentic workflow for cross-national research and is validating it through comparison with AlertHub study protocols to ensure it can be replicated in other contexts. A key finding is that only 2% of LLM-based search results are correct on the first attempt, underscoring the need for fine-tuning, prompt engineering, and iterative workflows. Data has been collected from 24 European countries, with some responses still pending.

Contact: Bengt Johansson & Sten Torpan

WG2

Mapping challenges of implementing effective warning communication

WG2 has completed a Systematic Literature Review, with a working paper submitted to the Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management, and has also finalized data collection for a Grey Literature Review. The group has produced two annual reports and an infographic of early findings, and plans to develop a journal article based on the Grey Literature Review for submission to a JCCM special issue in December 2026.

Contact: Yijing Wang & Heini Ruohonen

WG3

Create an open-access knowledge platform on disaster communication and warnings systems across Europe

WG3 advanced AlertHub's open-access knowledge platform by partnering with the UCPKN's Library to share resources on warning systems and disaster communication. Workshops in Darmstadt and Murcia aimed at discussing workflows and cross-WG contributions. Among other content discussed, country profiles as well as an interactive map providing background on warning systems in Europe will be featured online. Content will also be uploaded to the UCPKN Library.

Contact: Åshild Kolås & Fuzel Shaik

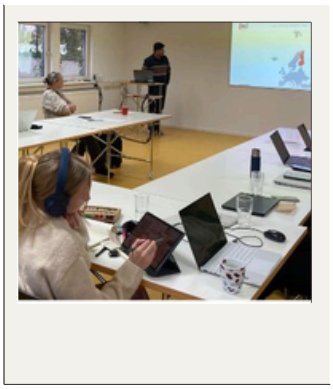
WG4

Disseminating knowledge of best practices in Europe

WG4 continues to advance communication and dissemination activities, refining its strategy during the Murcia meeting with a focus on improving the newsletter and strengthening its presence on LinkedIn. Priorities include more consistent external communication and expanding the newsletter's audience beyond project participants. The group is also developing an editorial calendar for the website blog and will support WG1 in preparing the project's white paper.

Contact: Renata Matkevičienė & Bianca Toniolo

Recent activities



Jan 12, 2026 | Workshop at Darmstadt, Germany

As part of AlertHub's ongoing efforts to develop effective tools for stakeholder engagement, a dedicated workshop was held to shape a shared concept for **integrating AlertHub's communication channels with the Knowledge Library** of its partner, the Union for Civil Protection Knowledge Network (UCPKN). The activities focused on strengthening this collaboration, with particular attention to increasing the visibility, reach, and impact of AlertHub's results and insights.

February 19, 2026 | Day of 1 Murcia Meeting

The first day, AlertHub reported strong progress in its first grant period, reviewed Working Group activities and scientific outputs, approved new organizational rules, and elected Andreas Schwarz as Global Advisory Board Coordinator. The keynote by **Jesús Arroyave** (Uninorte, Colombia), on bridging ideals and practice in Latin American risk communication, provided a thought-provoking perspective on compound risks and highlighted challenges such as politicization, polarization, and audience adaptation.

February 20, 2026 | Day of 2 Murcia Meeting

The second day focused on coordination and collaborative work across the network, starting with an AlertHub coordination session followed by parallel WG meetings. A dedicated RIMEDIS task force session addressed issues related to risk, media, and disinformation. The program also included an **immersive training on emergency** situations using emerging technologies, providing hands-on insights into innovative approaches.

March 9-11, 2026 | Panel at the International Crisis & Risk Comm Conference (ICRCC)

The panel at the **International Crisis & Risk Communication Conference (ICRCC)**, 9–11 March, Clemson University, US, entitled "Advancing Trusted and Inclusive Warning Communication: Global Perspectives on Climate Risk and Extreme Weather Events," had the participation from Florian Meissner, Henrik Olinder and four Global Advisory Board members: Angella Napakol, Aizhana Dzhumalieva, Juan-Andrés Rincón-González, and Hamilton Bean.

Network updates

Andreas Schwarz was elected as the Global Advisory Board (GAB) Coordinator. The GAB now comprises 14 members, with the addition of **Jeong Nam Kim, Hamilton Bean**, and **Mario Antonius Birowo**. The full composition of the board can be consulted on the project's website.

#AlertConversations with Åshild Kolås and Håkon Straume

This edition took place in February and was co-hosted with the **International Crisis and Risk Communication Association (ICRCA)** as part of a new partnership aimed at strengthening collaboration, networking, and the visibility of both initiatives in the field of warning communication. The session brought together two distinguished speakers - Åshild Kolås and Håkon Straume - who offered complementary technological and social science perspectives.

Florian Meissner, Chair of AlertHub, was elected as the new President of the International Crisis and Risk Communication Association (ICRCA).

Sten Torpan, WG 1 Co-leader, presented findings from a cross-comparative study developed within the AlertHub at the International Crisis and Risk Communication Conference 2026 (Clemson, US).

Interview

by Toshiyuki Watanabe

Why is improving warning communication becoming increasingly important in the contexts of climate change and more frequent extreme events.

Let me share an example from my family. In my hometown in Japan, one day in September 2000, nearly twice the previous record rainfall was observed—about 428.0 mm in a single day compared to 240.1 mm in 1896, a record that had stood for more than 100 years. The river, which could flood the entire town if it overflowed, had already begun to exceed its banks at weaker points. An evacuation order was issued just before midnight. A neighborhood association leader, mobilized by the municipality, knocked on my family's door to share the warning. They decided to evacuate more out of politeness toward the person than fear of flooding. By early morning, the river had flooded, and much of the town was underwater. What this example shows is that extreme events are often foreseeable to some extent. Forecasts and observations can indicate their potential severity. However, as in my family's case, people may not fully grasp the seriousness, which can lead to life-threatening consequences. While this is a small example from my family, a similar pattern can be observed worldwide. Reducing this gap through improving warning communication is essential in the context of climate change and more frequent extreme events.

In your experience, what are the main challenges in communicating warnings clearly and effectively to the public?

One key challenge is that information providers may assume their messages are clear and effective, while they are not always perceived that way by the public. In Japan, for example, evacuation messages often include phrases such as "take actions to protect your life" or "people in dangerous areas should evacuate." However, these statements are rarely accompanied by clear explanations of what specific actions are expected or how individuals can recognize whether they are in a risky situation. Similar challenges can also be observed in the Netherlands.

For instance, research commissioned by the national meteorological institute* found that only about 37% of respondents correctly hat Code Orange indicates a high likelihood of dangerous weather, while 56% mistakenly t interpreted it as equivalent to Code Yellow. These examples show that there are many potential pitfalls in warning communication. Closer collaboration between practitioners and researchers can create more opportunities to identify hidden obstacles and improve warning communication in a clearer and more effective way.

What motivated you to join the AlertHub network, and what value do you see in this European collaboration?

At first, it was somewhat accidental. I met Yijing, the leader of Working Group 2, at an exhibition in Rotterdam where she was presenting AlertHub with a poster. As soon as I learned about the project, it felt like a perfect fit for me, as it aligned closely with my long-standing interest in improving warning communication. I am very grateful to Yijing for connecting me to this opportunity, as well as to Florian, who took the time to provide detailed explanations during the onboarding process. One of the strengths of this network is not only the opportunity to learn about challenges in different countries, but also access to solid theoretical input. It has also been valuable to meet colleagues across disciplines and countries whom I had not previously encountered. In a word, it has broadened my perspective. Through my involvement in this network, I hope to share useful practices and insights from Europe and other regions with Japan. At the same time, I would also like to share Japanese approaches to warning systems—which are not always widely known due to language barriers—with those who are interested. Please feel free to connect with me on LinkedIn and start a conversation.

How can sharing knowledge and best practices across countries help strengthen warning system?

Even though we are dealing with the same natural phenomena that can lead to disasters, the way they are communicated differs across countries and cultures.

For example, many countries provide real-time water level data online. In Japan, the information is often presented as numerical data, graphs, along with live camera images and cross-sectional views of rivers.

In the UK, however, this information is presented in a more contextualized way. They present current water levels in the context of historical events, as well as thresholds for flood alerts. For example, a water level of 6.20m is accompanied by explanations such as "Property flooding is possible above this level. One or more flood warnings may be issued," along with references to previous events such as "Historical event: Overflowing of flood defences on Acre Lane." In this way, the water level is translated into meaningful information for local residents, capturing both its spatial implications—where and to what extent impacts may occur—and its significance in relation to historical events.

Developing such approaches may seem straightforward, but in reality, it requires a clear vision. Learning from best practices and sharing knowledge across countries is a source of inspiration for improving our own systems.

In your opinion, what is one key factor to ensure warning reach the right people and are truly understood.

In my opinion, one key factor is "listening before telling". I came across this principle in a book on participatory communication during my graduate studies in Australia, and it has stayed with me ever since. I believe it applies strongly to warning communication as well.

The challenge, of course, is how to listen and how deeply we listen. Some national weather agencies do listen when they aim to improve warnings through surveys. However, more approaches are needed to meaningfully involve users.

In this regard, learning from research designs and practices around the world can also broaden our perspective. In efforts to improve hurricane communication in the United States, researchers developed visual experiments in which different prototypes of a hurricane impact map were tested with users. The German Weather Service, in collaboration with the German Committee for Disaster Reduction, has conducted stakeholder workshops using a serious game with a battery-powered toy train set to visualise local risks and jointly discuss disaster response in a tabletop setting. Both cases offer valuable insights into how to design processes for deeper listening and better engagement with stakeholders.

We must design warning systems based on people's needs and continuously improve how we listen to people.

***Toshiyuki Watanabe** is an independent disaster risk consultant based in the Netherlands, whose interest in warning communication began after experiencing failures during a major flood in Japan. He later worked as a disaster manager in local government and continued his efforts to improve the use of critical information in disasters at national and international levels, including with the World Bank in Ethiopia. He holds a Master's degree in Communication and has authored a practical guide to Japanese warning systems.*