

**Diversity Awareness Strategy**

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executive summary

About the project

LINKS “Strengthening links between technologies and society for European disaster resilience” is a comprehensive study on disaster governance in Europe. In recent years, social media and crowdsourcing (SMCS) have been integrated into crisis management for improved information gathering and collaboration across European communities. The effectiveness of SMCS on European disaster resilience, however, remains unclear, the use of SMCS in disasters in different ways and under diverse conditions. In this context, the overall objective of LINKS is to strengthen links between technologies and society for improved European disaster resilience, by producing sustainable advanced learning on the use of SMCS in disasters. This is done across three complementary knowledge domains:

Disaster Risk Perception and Vulnerability (DRPV)

Disaster Management Processes (DMP)

Disaster Community Technologies (DCT)

Bringing together 15 partners and 2 associated partners across Europe (Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands) and beyond (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Japan), the project will develop a framework to understand, measure and govern SMCS for disasters. The LINKS Framework consists of learning materials, such as scientific methods, practical tools, and guidelines, addressing different groups of stakeholders (e.g. researchers, practitioners, and policy makers). It will be developed and evaluated through five practitioner-driven European cases, representing different disaster scenarios (earthquakes, flooding, industrial hazards, terrorism, drought), cutting across disaster management phases and diverse socioeconomic and cultural settings in four countries (Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands). Furthermore, LINKS sets out to create the LINKS Community, which brings together a wide variety of stakeholders, including first-responders, public authorities, civil society organisations, business communities, citizens, and researchers across Europe, dedicated to improving European disaster resilience through the use of SMCS.

About this deliverable

This document provides the Diversity Awareness Strategy for the LINKS project. It functions as a guide to issues relating to diversity within the research and processes of the LINKS consortium. It is a living document to be updated throughout the lifetime of the project.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction 3

1.1 Diversity by Design 3

1.2 The Ethics Advisory Board and the Diversity Awareness Working Group for Communication 4

2. Diversity in the LINKS Project 5

2.1 Diversity in the LINKS Consortium, Meetings, Workshops and Events Promoted by LINKS Partners 5

2.2 Diversity in the Research 6

2.3 Diversity in the Dissemination of Results 9

3. Bibliography 11

List of acronyms

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| **Abbreviation / Acronym** | **Description** |
| DCT | Disaster Community Technologies |
| DMP | Disaster Management Process |
| DRPV | Disaster Risk Perception and Vulnerability |
| LCC | LINKS Community Center |
| LCW | LINKS Community Workshop |
| SMCS | Social Media and Crowdsourcing |
| WP | Work Package |

# Introduction

## Diversity by Design

The overall objective of LINKS is to strengthen links between technologies and society for improved European disaster resilience, by producing sustainable advanced learning on the use of social media and crowdsourcing (SMCS) in disasters**.** In order to examine the effectiveness of SMSC for European disaster resilience, we are taking into account the use of SMCS in disasters in different ways and under diverse conditions. That is, this project brings together 15 partners and 2 associated partners from across the world, uses a wide variety of scientific methods, tools and technologies, and guidelines addressing different groups of stakeholders (e.g., researchers, first-responders, practitioners and policy makers, and bringing them together in a LINKS Community), incorporates five different hazard scenarios across Europe including different disaster management phases against a variety of socio-technical and cultural backgrounds. In LINKS this process is defined as *Diversity by Design*.

The Diversity by Design nature of the LINKS project translates to two facets of diversity:

First, diversity in terms of different groups consisting of different demographic characteristics (e.g., gender and cultural identity, age) and their intersectionality, differences in diversity awareness and differences in vulnerability. The groups refer to different partners and stakeholders (i.e., diversity in the consortium), but also target groups such as research participants and communities affected by disasters (i.e., diversity in the research). Vulnerable groups refer to those groups that due to physical, social, economic, and environmental factors or processes, are more exposed and susceptible to the impacts of hazards (see LINKS Glossary).

Second, the Diversity by Design nature of the project refers to diversity in terms of knowledge, skills, and access to information and resources that the abovementioned different groups bring to the project. That is, each of the groups involved, including the partners, stakeholders but also participants and vulnerable communities, can offer unique aspects and insights into the research questions. When effectively joint and shared, we can build on the existing knowledge and meet the specific needs of the different groups. Hence, we consider diversity as a resource for strengthening disaster resilience.

Considering these two aspects, diversity is indicated by two facets in the LINKS Glossary:

“1) diversity as a characteristic, consisting of demographic differences between individuals (e.g., gender, age, cultural identity), diversity awareness and vulnerability; 2) diversity as a resource, including a range of capabilities, skills, knowledge, and information access.”

## The Ethics Advisory Board and the Diversity Awareness Working Group for Communication

Within the LINKS project, the Ethics Advisory Board (EAB) has among its goals to facilitate and support partners with any diversity issues and to plan actions to monitor the diversity awareness strategy. With any questions or concerns related to diversity, please contact the EAB (LINKS-EAB@safetyinnovation.center). Furthermore, EAB has created a working group on diversity awareness with the aim of promoting diversity awareness in communication and in spreading the results of the LINKS project. If you are looking for any further information on diversity awareness in communication, please contact the EAB asking to be linked to the working group or contact directly one of the members of the working group. Members of the working group are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1: Diversity Awareness Working group members

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
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# Diversity in the LINKS Project

In line with the six key priorities listed by the European Research Area in the Communication set out in July 2012 and with the three core documents of Horizon 2020 (i.e., The Horizon 2020 Regulation, The Rules for participation, and The Specific Programme implementing Horizon 2020), diversity and inclusion are deemed important topics in the LINKS project. It is perceived as a matter of equal rights and opportunities as well as added value in terms of excellence, creativity, and resources.

As such, we foster 1) diversity in the consortium, in particular regard to gender, age and vulnerability and on the other hand, 2) diversity in our research (e.g., participants, research questions), and 3) in our dissemination and outreach. In general, with the LINKS project, we aim to deliver inclusive project results, deliverables and outcomes.

## Diversity in the LINKS Consortium, Meetings, Workshops and Events Promoted by LINKS Partners

The LINKS consortium values diversity and inclusion by fostering equality in matters of employment and opportunities and as such the career-development of partners, following the European Policy of equal opportunities. Hence, the consortium is composed of stakeholders from different cultures and backgrounds and with different gender identities. Diversity and inclusion will be respected in all the phases of the LINKS project, and fair (gender) representation and equal opportunities will be fostered in the management structures and leading roles, as planned in D1.5: Bonati & Morelli 2020 (see also D1.6: Nardini & Bonati, 2021). As such, we report on the gender representation of the consortium partners, and we will explore potential differences between gender identities (intersecting with e.g., age, ethnicity) with regard to inclusion.

In addition, we also focus on the diversity awareness of LINKS partners, in particular of the stakeholders consisting of, or working with, disaster management professionals. For instance, from a gender perspective, high status and male dominated professions such as first responders (e.g., police, firefighters, but also medical experts), might contribute to a masculine work culture (Cheryan & Markus, 2020; Desmond, 2006; 2008; Lyng, 2014; Van den Brink, 2011) where gender stereotyping is prevalent (e.g., Ellemers, 2018; Derks, van Laar, Ellemers, de Groot, 2011; Froelich, Olsson, Dorrough, Martiny, 2020). This, in turn, might hinder effective cooperation and decision making (see for example Nielsen et al., 2017; Nielsen et al., 2018). As such, we pay attention to the diversity awareness of emergency professionals, for example by the administration of a questionnaire (incorporated in the Partner Self-Ethics assessment questionnaire) among LINKS partners to map their diversity awareness and practices (e.g., implicit biases, data collection and data interpretation; see for example Eklund & Tellier, 2012). If necessary, we will develop tailored interventions to create more diversity awareness and provide concrete tools for partners to use to facilitate inclusion in the research. This could range from the implementation of a (updated) diversity policy, an online info sheet about diversity practices, or an online diversity awareness training (e.g., Van der Lee & Ellemers, 2018). The goal is to foster an inclusive work culture as well as inclusive research designs.

Furthermore, the LINKS consortium organizes workshops and events in different locations. In doing so, we aim to be inclusive by facilitating the participation of partners and stakeholders from different backgrounds and who may have limited opportunity to travel (due to e.g., family circumstance, economic constraints). Furthermore, we continuously stress the importance of diversity and inclusion of diverse staff and participants in the workshops and we encourage stakeholders to consider these aspects when organizing or attending LINKS events.

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| Box 1: Recommendations for Considering Diversity in the LINKS Consortium and in Events Organized by LINKS Partners   * When composing internal taskforces or working groups, ensure fair representation of demographical diversity among the members in terms of e.g., gender, cultural background. * When appointing leadership roles, consider and short-list members of underrepresented groups like women and people of colour. * When organizing events or workshops, ensure that all stakeholders have the possibility to participate in terms of travel, accommodation, finances. * When it was not possible to warrant diversity in a taskforce, working group or event, reflect and report to the EAB and in the research ethics self-assessment survey on the reasons why this was the case and how to overcome this in the future. * Discuss the Partner Self-Ethics assessment questionnaire with your team and identify potential challenges for diversity awareness. * For any questions or concerns about diversity with regard to the consortium, contact the Ethics Advisory Board. |

## Diversity in the Research

In the LINKS project, we recognize that diversity plays a relevant role in Disaster Risk Perception and Vulnerability (DRPV), Disaster Management Processes (DMP) and Disaster Community Technologies (DCT) within local communities. This may influence the data derived through the case assessments (WP5-6) as well as the participation and knowledge produced through the LINKS Community Workshops (LCWs; WP8) and LINKS Community Center (LCC; WP7). Thus, a diversity perspective will be adopted in the research activities across WPs and in the development of the LINKS framework.

There are four core questions in which diversity is addressed across the research carried out in the LINKS project. In particular, we aim to consider diversity in terms of risk perceptions and vulnerabilities (*the why*) among diverse individuals' communities (*the who*) and the ways to address and harness diversity within specific research questions (*the what and how*), as a means of strengthening disaster resilience through inclusion and involvement. For example, greater accessibility to social media and crowdsourcing (SMCS) solutions and inclusion in the public debate can promote disaster risk management.

**The Why**

One of the objectives of LINKS is to contribute to a consolidated, common understanding of disaster resilience in Europe. By recognizing diversity and its (potential) impact, we further contribute to the understanding of disaster resilience. We include different types of individuals (e.g., diversity markers, geographical context, knowledge sharing, perceptions of risk) and system related dimensions of diversity (e.g., accessibility, governance) and assess to what extent they impact (either facilitate or hinder) resilience. These factors are interconnected meaning that factors primarily considered as individual dimensions can also to some extent be considered as system related dimensions, and vice versa.

**The Who**

We focus on intersectionality (McCall, 2005), meaning that we acknowledge that diversity markers (such as gender, age, culture, geopolitical factors) are interconnected and as such impact vulnerability and resilience. In the LINKS project, we focus in particular on gender, age and vulnerability as individual diversity markers. These markers and their intersectionality are highly relevant in disaster studies (see D2.1, Bonati, 2020) as they, for example, can offer unique perspectives to participatory processes in dealing with SMCS in disasters. However, also other aspects are included on the basis of the vulnerability paradigm developed in D2.1, based on issues of accessibility, connectivity and mobility that are analysed in relation to diversity.

As such, we strive to promote and facilitate the participation of different social groups with diverse characteristics and backgrounds. As such, we promote the inclusion of (groups of) participants based on their gender, age, language, disability, income or any other reason.

**The What**

*What* are the key diversity issues in LINKS research? At this time LINKS outlines three core areas that are relevant for case coordinators and WP 2 – 4.

* **Accessibility, inclusivity** and **participation** are closely related to research. How is diversity addressed in terms of ensuring that diverse groups (of individuals) have access to knowledge, information, tools, and are able to participate equally in research in order to contribute to strengthening local disaster resilience? This entails an assessment of limitations such as cultural and political climates, social economic status, marginalization and (personal) disabilities which potentially affect access to SMCS and other tools (also see below, the bullet point about Technology). In addition, how do institutions and local systems support and incorporate potential differences in accessibility and participation? The assessment should also include an assessment of the capabilities of institutions to adapt to needs of individuals and relevant groups with regard to their access to SMCS and other tools.
* Is the **Technology**, that is SMCS, inclusive by design or do diversity issues play a role in the use of SMCS technology? Diversity issues and vulnerability affect the access to (see above) and use of SMCS technology. For example, the use of SMCS technology might be influenced by the political context (OpenNet Initiative) and is different among different social groups. Although the use of SMCS is widespread and growing among the public, it is not used similarly among different social groups (Pew Research Center, 2021). Among the elderly, the use of SMCS is relatively low. This makes age a vulnerability in the access to and use of SMCS in disaster communication and resilience.

**The How**

How do we address the key diversity issues from a diversity perspective? Moreover, how can the results obtained by LINKS research feed into addressing these issues in practice? To this end, some procedures have been included in the LINKS project to ensure that diversity is considered and included in the research. A list of recommendations can be found in Box 2.

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| Box 2: Recommendations for Considering Diversity in the Research  Participant recruitment and data collection   * When selecting recruitment areas, consider different areas (i.e., locations) to represent the diversity of cultures and provide opportunities for all relevant groups to participate.   + Is there fair gender representation among the participants? * In WP2-6 (field research) and WP8 (workshop activities), when organizing community workshops and other research activities, facilitate diversity by fostering proportional representation of different communities and group (e.g., cultures, gender, age). We will stress the importance of fostering diversity and proportional representation of different communities to the stakeholders.   Data analyses and presenting results   * In WP2, gender and age will be adopted as one of the variables affecting risk perception and vulnerability; analyse these variables as aggregated data in order to investigate the role of diversity in crises response and resilience.   Communication in research and accessibility   * Communicate in an appropriate way with potential participants, by e.g., adapting the language to the relevant parties. For example, country specific translations, gender-neutral and inclusive pronouns. * Are the means for participation and communication accessible for all relevant groups and communities? * When it was not possible to warrant diversity in the research, reflect and report in the research ethics self-assessment survey on the reasons why this was the case to overcome this in the future. * For any questions or concerns about diversity with regard to research, contact (members of) the Ethics Advisory Board. |

## Diversity in the Dissemination of Results

We aim to deliver results that foster inclusion in such a way that we consider the perceptions and vulnerabilities of all participating and relevant social groups. In other words, we will 1) select the relevant results for those groups they pertain to, and 2) communicate those results in an understandable way.

Communication between professionals and public in the project refers to information sharing, through different platforms and channels, both directly and indirectly (e.g., policies, social media, interactions). The language used to share information regarding risks, disasters, regardless of the platform or channel, might be prone to creating inequality and exclusion (e.g., Alvinius, Deverell, & Hede, 2020; Cornell, 2005; Ericson & Mellstrom, 2016; Jung, Shavitt, Viswanathan, & Hilbe, 2014; see also Garg, Schiebinger, Jurafsky, & Zou, 2018; Jones, Hine, & Marks, 2017; DeJesus, Umscheid & Gelman, 2021). As such, our protocol for dissemination (WP9, that will be provided in deliverable 9.2 expected in Month 21), will include a strategy as well as guidelines on how to effectively select and communicate project results to diverse social groups.

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| Box 3: Recommendations for Considering Diversity in the Dissemination of Results   * Target results to relevant groups, as not all results are relevant to all groups. Select those results that are relevant for the context and needs of specific groups. * Communicate clearly and adapt the language to the needs of the groups that receive the selected results. * Preferably use data visualizations. * Include clear and explicit points for action/areas of attention that will foster community resilience and disaster risk management. * Consider the means by which data are disseminated: are the means accessible to all relevant groups? * For any questions or concerns about diversity with regard to the dissemination of results, contact (members of) the Diversity Awareness Taskforce on Communication or the Ethics Advisory Board. |

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