

Report on the external evaluation of the “Building safe community” awareness campaign D.5.5.1.

Project Acronym	Firespill
Project ID Number	10255377
Project Title	Fostering Improved Reaction of crossborder Emergency Services and Prevention Increasing safety Level
Priority Axis	Safety and resilience
Specific objective	2.2 - Increase the safety of the Programme area from natural and man-made disaster
Work Package Number	5
Work Package Title	WP5 Activation of citizens participatory process
Activity Number	5.5 Evaluation of “Building safe community awareness campaign
Activity Title	Report of the “Building safe community awareness campaign
Partner in Charge	PP3
Partners involved	ALL
Status	Final
Distribution	Partnership
Date of release:	30/06/2023

Introduction

The aim of the FIRESPELL project was to increase the capacity of emergency services to improve cross-border efficiency in tackling natural and manmade disasters by decreasing the exposure of the populations to the impact of hazards and increasing the safety of the Croatian and Italian Adriatic basin by improving emergency prevention and management measures and instruments. Monitoring and crisis management of natural and manmade disasters represent area of strategic interest for HR-IT territories faced with similar problems and in a quest for common solutions. Rising concentration of human activities calls for stronger efforts in preventing risk on both shores. FIRESPELL project overall objective was to increase the capacity of emergency service organizations and citizenship for cross-border operations in response to natural and manmade disasters in the Adriatic Basin. The project had 13 partners. The partners were Abruzzo region, Adriatic training and research center for accidental marine pollution preparedness and response-ATRAC, Development agency of Šibenik-Knin county, Dubrovnik Neretva region, Emilia-Romagna region, Environmental protection agency of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Europe point consortium, Marche region, Public institution Rera S.D. for coordination and development of Split Dalmatia county (lead partner), Puglia region-civil protection department, Region of Istria, University of Padova-Department of civil environmental and architectural engineering, Zadar County and two associated partners Split Dalmatia County and Coast Guard, maritime direction of Pescara.



Focus group of this report are 7 partners from Croatia.

Project budget: 16.492.799,60 €

Project start date: April 1, 2020

Project end date: June 30, 2023

Project was divided into 5 working packages.

Work package 5

Work Package 5 under title “Activation of citizens participatory process” had a purpose to implement campaign to reach out and draw people closer from awareness to education all the way to a culture of safety. It consisted of events dedicated to social media “virtual” citizens’ communities; info days, tackling issues like preventive behavior, social media use in hazardous occurrences; exhibitions; hazard demonstration exercises, training courses involving exercises and simulations (basic and advanced) for citizens and volunteers.

2.1. Objectives and activities

Activation of citizens participatory process aimed at activating the participatory process of citizenship in emergency situations:

- changing its role of “vulnerable element” to the “active sensor” during hazardous occurrences to obtain its contribution to civil protection activities within its own living territory
- get a proper behavior and a thorough knowledge of risk issues, as well as closer cooperation with civil protection units to reduce the natural and manmade phenomena that lead to emergencies.

To achieve these aims, a carefully designed awareness Campaign was implemented in territories of all project partners. WP 5 was divided in 5 activities:

Act 5.1 foreseen gathering of best practices and previous experiences with the aim to design and plan all the activities dedicated to activate the interest of citizens' communities in involved territories. Activities were listed and diversified according to the different target groups and the selected territories.

Act 5.2 launched informational round of activities like info days, exhibitions with demonstration of civil service equipment to attract the interest of the youth as well as distribution of risk awareness pamphlets and publications, with the goal to deepen common people knowledge on the possibilities to become active participants in pre, during and after emergency occurrences.

Act. 5.3 consisted of designing specific training modules addressed at different target groups (schools, municipalities, civil protection operators and volunteers, tourist service and other operators) and were tested at local level.

Act 5.4 carried out the digital content campaign aimed at implementing social media communication campaigns via Facebook and Instagram, addressed to citizens and policy makers, in order to improve their knowledge of emergency services organization and functions and their readiness to cooperate.

Activity 5.5 referred to the evaluation of the implemented awareness campaign and lessons drawn in the form of a handbook on "Citizens contribution to reducing risk and building resilience".

WP5 aimed at the changes in the way of thinking and behaving among citizens, with special focus on the youngest whose opinions have not been formed completely yet. It is only after the new behavior models are embraced by the population living in the high-risk areas, that most project outputs are guaranteed their durability after the project closure. Also, video materials, publications and billboards will be shared and viewed after the project closure, thus transferring the outputs and project messages to new recipients. Implemented trainings produced educational materials that could be used by various organizations, even outside of the current partnership and after the project end. Evaluation of the campaign was planned with the aim to analyze the impact of the public awareness campaign on the target audience and draw lessons that may be used for future, similar campaigns in other projects, within and outside program areas.

2.3. Target groups

In the project description, 6 target groups were identified:

General public: Citizens of involved municipalities (including school children, adult students), tourists of different typology, increase their knowledge on civil protection mechanisms and contribute to risk mitigation through raised awareness. Target value was 200 000 inhabitants of involved territories.

Local, regional and national public authorities and related entities: Regional, national, or local institutions and the neighboring municipalities will improve the resilience of their own territory by upgrading risk management and prevention. Target value was 40.

Emergency services and coast guard centers: Regional functional centers in Italy and Croatia dealing with emergency management: firefighting corps, civil protection regional/county units, coast guards. Enhancement of their operational capabilities will be furthered by the provision of safety equipment, emergency vehicles, communications systems, and Advanced Training Centre establishment. Target values was 52.

NGOs: This target group included volunteers' associations and crisis management associations established as non-government organizations with the aim to protect people and resources from fire and other natural and man-made disasters. They will receive special attention in the community disaster awareness activities, furthering as well as sharing their knowledge related to risk prevention and management. The target value was 13.

Education and training centers: Education and training organizations of ITA and CRO regions involved were addressed in the phase of planning and implementing public education initiatives. FIRESPELL have given due attention to education and training centers improving knowledge and skills essential for disaster preparedness. The target value was 10.

Universities and research institutes: Universities and research centers operating in natural and man-made emergencies prevention, monitoring and intervention. FIRESPELL stimulated additional research implemented by universities and research centers, particularly at cross border level, which were increasingly linked to policy making and practice in disaster risk reduction. The target value was 4.

Analysis of work package 5 activities

Important part of the Campaign was to improve citizens' understanding of the Civil Protection organization and functions, thus enhancing the cooperation and readiness level as well as building trust between stakeholders in the event or in anticipation of hazards. In all involved territories the above Campaign foreseen info days, exhibitions with demonstrations of Civil Protection vehicles and equipment (tailor made to attract youth), as well as distribution of various risk awareness publications, with the goal to deepen common people knowledge on the possibilities to become active participants in pre, during and after hazard occurrences.

Guidelines on type of activities for each target group was developed by Dubrovnik Neretva region under Activity 5.1. Design of "building safe community" awareness campaign. This deliverable had main objective to facilitate the implementation of the Work Package 5.

Analysis of WP5 Activities was carried out having in mind following principles:

- relevance (complementarity)
- effectiveness

- efficiency
- sustainability
- recommendations for the design and implementation of future activities like the campaign (programmatic or other areas).

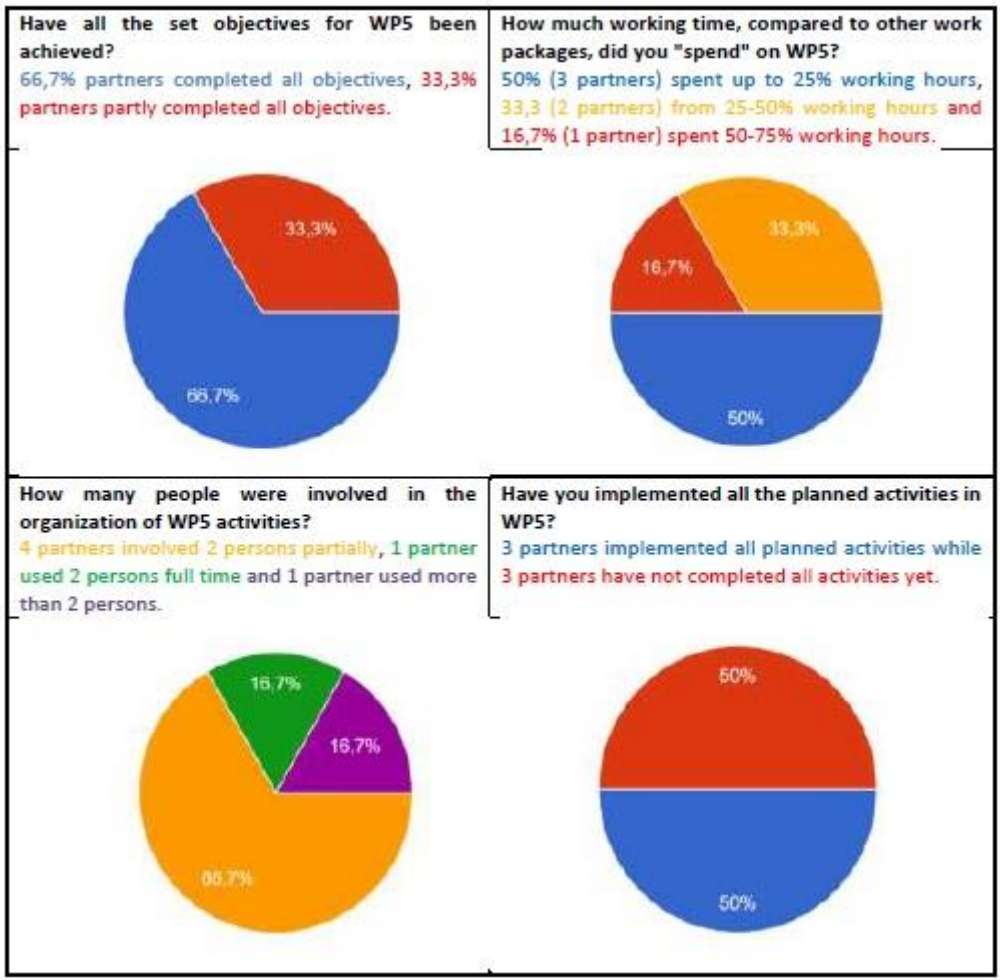
Research techniques used:

- documented research (considered all materials available on SharePoint for WP5)
- on-line surveying (online survey via Google form created with 25 questions and completed by all HR partners)
- monitoring of traditional and new media related to project (online sources on the websites of the project HR partners, as well as sources on social networks: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter (Interreg IT-HR general user account) was analyzed)
- interview the stakeholders from HR partners (online meeting with a representative of each partner – where necessary after processing the results of the online survey)

Online survey results

Online survey results referred to the data collected from Google form conducted from 05 to 15 June 2023. Structure of the survey was starting with general information about WP5 activities, following with questions related to WP5 preparation and implementation process, continuing with data about particular focus groups and activities. Online survey was completed by all 7 HR partners with one remark (Rera S.D. and Split Dalmatia County completed the survey jointly as they are covering same project territory so there are 6 answers to each of 25 questions of the survey).

Objective, time management, organization of WP activities



WP5 objectives have not been implemented yet. Partners are still working on the implementation, and we can expect the implementation of all objectives by the end of the project. So far 50% of partners implemented all activities while 50% of partners are finalizing its activities. WP5 activities required significant time commitment of all partners and each partner involved two persons partly/fulltime in the organization of WP5 activities. Activity for most partners that is still pending is D.5.4.1 (FB or other social media close groups set up). This activity is in process; a model/type of media is required for the group to be used at least to some extent. It is planned to form a group by the end of project.

The implementation of WP5, like the implementation of other work packages, for most of the partners has been slowed down due to the COVID – 19 pandemics. Pandemic led to an acceptable delay in the implementation of certain activities that envisaged the involvement of a larger number of people or the organization of public events. The implementation of the project at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic may have had the greatest impact on its better visibility among the target groups.

Target groups: In section 2.3. of this document, 6 target groups are listed that were identified for this project. Following is the feedback from HR partners on reaching target values and description of activities that were carried out in support of the achievement of the target values.

Target group general public

Main activities organized by partners were Info days, demonstration exercises, presentation of the results of all project activities through public information media (press conferences), creation and publication of short videos about all project activities on social networks, designed presentations with preschool and school-aged children. The public was informed through the media (various portals, printed editions, television and radio programs), leased part of the media space for information on the implementation of project activities and project results. Interesting activity was performance in the theater "We will build the house again" as part of the FIRESPELL project. Having in mind that 1.260,535 inhabitants live in HR territories where the project was implemented (according to last national survey from 2021) and having mind the media activities (TV, radios, Internet portal, social media accounts of project and project partners) we could estimate with high probability that target value for HR partners has been achieved. Also, we should state that most of the media that was used to share information about the project activities are available in all Republic of Croatia and reach of the project information was beyond the HR partners territories.



Photo 1.: Floods rescue training in Dubrovnik Neretva Region

(Source: <https://www.dubrovniknet.hr/obuka-hgss-a-za-spasavanje-u-kriznim-situacijama-na-vodi>)

Target group: local, regional and national public authorities and related entities

To support in the reaching regional, national, or local institutions and the neighboring municipalities to improve the resilience of their own territory by upgrading risk management and prevention, many project activities were organized.



Photo 2.: Istria County Prefect - Life-saving medical equipment acquired by project

(Source: <http://pulskasvakodnevica.com/index.php/2023/05/11>)

During Info days, demonstration exercises, presentation of the results of all project activities through public information media (press conferences), different type of public authorities took part. Having in mind that in the Republic of Croatia, national administration and executive bodies of local, regional (sub-regional) self-government are stakeholders of civil protection system, they took part in the project activities. Municipality heads, city mayors, county prefects (including their deputies), firefighting commanders, head of civil protection headquarters, police chiefs, Red Cross directors, head of mountain rescue service stations participated in project activities. Based on the feedback from HR project partners, minimum of 80 entities participated in the project activities.

Target value Emergency services and coast guard centers

Emergency operation centers in Croatia within civil protection system are part of firefighting brigades, 112 county centers, police operation center, emergency medical center and maritime coordination center. Participation of this centers was important, not only for project visibility but for training of operators.

Based on the feedback from HR project partners during Info days, training, conferences and demonstration exercises, at least 128 representatives from emergency operations centers took part in the project activities.

Target value non-governmental organizations

In the Civil Protection System of the Republic of Croatia non-governmental organizations has very important role. Voluntary fire units, Red Cross societies on local and regional level, mountain rescue service stations, scouts, divers and canine organization are part of the civil protection system. NGO representatives participated in the project activities and have received information on special attention in the community disaster awareness activities, related to risk prevention and management. Based on the feedback from HR project partners during Info days, training, conferences and demonstration exercises, at least 25 NGO's took part in the project activities

Target value Education and training centers

In the Republic of Croatia education and training centers are not developed in the stage where they could meet all the requirement by the operational forces. Additional value of this project is opening of two new training centers for civil protection system in the Republic of Croatia. The improvement of the operational capabilities of emergency services will be ensured by Center for advanced training for firefighting and civil

protection in Vučevica, Split Dalmatia County. Investment through the Firespill project worth a total of HRK 65 million (approximately 8,6 million euros).



Photo 3.: Croatian Prime Minister opening the construction work in Vučevica

(Source: <https://www.dalmacijadanas.hr/velika-svecanost-u-vucevici/>)

In Kula Norinska, Dubrovnik Neretva Region, Center for training operational forces of civil protection was opened. It was an investment worth more than HRK 7.5 million (approximately 1 million euros).



Photo 4.: Opening of the Training Center for Civil Protection Operational Forces – Kula Norinska

(Source: <http://www.edubrovnik.org>)

Training programs (International Trauma Life Support - ITLS course) for operational forces was design and implemented, flood rescue training and logistics training were carried. Based on the feedback from HR project partners during Info days, training, conferences and demonstration exercises, at least 15 representatives from education and training centers took part in the project activities.

Target value Universities and research institutes

Universities and research centers are having an important role in the Civil Protection System in the Republic of Croatia by conducting research and implementing new scientific and expert findings into new solutions and technologies relevant for all activities in the disaster management. During the implementation of the project 12 representatives from several universities (Split and Zadar University) and research institutes participated in the implementation of its activities in various ways.

Conclusion: all given target values were achieved by HR partners.

Project activities (deliverables)

In order to achieve project objectives and target values, different project activities were organized by all HR partners that were prepared and distributed in the form of project deliverable.

Info Days is a great way to share information about a project and engage stakeholders and target groups. Each HR partner has organized two Info Day (minimum requirement). The organization of the Info Day was different from partner to partner which is a good asymmetric approach. Info Days were organized as back-to back activity with exhibitions, demonstration exercises, education in schools, promotion activities (presentation of brochures, videos, etc.). Many stakeholders from Croatian Civil Protection System (firefighters, civil protection, Red Cross, mountain rescue service, police, emergency medical service) participated in the Info Days with project target groups described above. Locations of the Info Days also vary from partner to partner (organization headquarter, schools, exercise location, emergency service headquarter, conference in the hotel). Based on inputs from HR partners 500+ participants took part in the Info Days.

Exhibitions with demonstrations of Civil Protection vehicles and equipment supported raising awareness about civil protection activities, showcasing capabilities, and/or promoting community engagement. Exhibitions were organized as back-to back activity with Info Days, demonstration exercises, education in schools, promotion activities, etc.

Based on inputs from HR partners 250+ participants took part in the exhibitions, not including the number of participants from exhibitions organized jointly with demonstration exercise organized in WP4. Good approach is to organized exhibition with civil protection exercise or at the locations of emergency services where most of the capabilities can be displayed and seen by target audience.

Risk awareness publications designed included activities aimed at encouraging citizen participation by creation of publications in the form of brochures, coloring books, puzzles, comics and picture books (printed and digital versions). The goal of the publication was to introduce to target groups and the general public in an interesting way, an idea of the possibility of involving citizens in the processes of prevention, as well as response to crisis situations. Focus on scenarios were fires, earthquakes, sea pollution, war consequences in the Republic of Croatia showing joint cooperation and resolution of these crises by the emergency services.



Photo 5.: Presentation of comic book “Everyday heroes” in Istria County

(Source: <https://www.irena-istra.hr/hr/clanci/istarska-zupanija-novosti/14078/u-os-vidikovac-predstavljeni-strip-i-slikovnica-heroji-svakodnevice-u-sklopu-eu-projekta-firespill/>)

Each partner delivered at least 2 types of publications with minimum of 200 handouts (printed and/or digital versions). Dissemination of this publications were organized in cooperation with civil protection stakeholder and back-to back with Info Days, demonstration exercises, education in schools, promotion activities, etc.

Project billboards or banners had a main purpose to promote a project, raise awareness, and to convey a specific message. Billboards or banners were prepared by all HR partner while for one partner are in the development process. They were prepared on the risk awareness topics (like fire prevention) and put on the visible places in urban area on the territories of the HR project partners. Roll ups were also prepared and used during every event as part of all work packages of the project.

Programs for specific training modules developed and regionally adapted requires a systematic approach and specific training requirements for the target audience. Following program were mane or used for training activities:

- firefighter training program for extinguishing and rescuing from indoor fires
- for the purposes of holding the ITLS course, the course provider created a separate training module focus to the emergency services
- coastal cleaning program was developed
- professional training module for members of the civil protection for rescue in swift waters with an international license RESCUE 3
- two training modules prepared for the general population
- one program/scenario for specific training modules.

One specific training modules was prepared by each HR project partner.

Training courses with practical exercises implemented could enhance the learning experience and enable participants to apply their knowledge in

real time scenarios. Each partner organized one training course with practical exercise that focused on relevant scenario like fires, floods, sea pollution, medical emergencies. All relevant stakeholders of civil protection system (firefighters, civil protection, Red Cross, mountain rescue service, police, emergency medical service) took part. Based on the data from HR partners, in these events participated 329 participants. During training courses and practical exercise, equipment were used that was purchased from the project.



Photo 6.: Practical exercise in holiday resort, Zadar County

(Source: <https://www.noviradio.hr/projekt-firespill-zurne-sluzbe-pokazale-spremnost-na-vjezbi-gasjenja-pozara-u-zatonu>)

Activities that was part of training and exercises focused on the community first aid, mass casualty triage, response organization, light search and rescue, fire suppression, emergency communications, psychosocial support, family reunification.

Facebook or other social media close groups set up had an objective to set up and using communication channels before an emergency. Creating closed groups on social media platforms, such as Facebook, can be an effective way to facilitate communication and coordination during emergencies among civil protection stakeholders. Four HR partner have not yet completed this task while one partner is already using Viber group (proved to be effective, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic) and one partner established group on the WhatsApp platform (group includes all emergency services at the level of the civil protection headquarters).

Informal participatory videos produced and video for pilot actions under WP4 has main objective to promote project activities. Videos were prepared or in last phase of processing (at least one informal video and video for WP4 pilots per partners). Videos focuses on the Info days, education and demonstration exercises, education in schools, promotion activities, handing over of equipment (vessels, command vehicles, fire simulation containers, etc.), conference, opening of construction works, etc. Videos were shared on YouTube and on project social media accounts as well on the official account of the project partners.

Following are several links with videos:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EttliDJ3YM&ab_channel=Dubrova%C4%8Dkatelevi_zija

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SP10RWIw2CM>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EttliDJ3YM>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T-ZUvLobCKA>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mK2mmAt_f0
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L5PI3iaBLpw>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mx6Y-bs1lk0>
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x300uikbNNQ>
- <https://www.facebook.com/diadoratv/videos/531383752029075/>

Interesting point is that during the entire period of construction of the fire boat, a lapse camera was installed at the location of the shipbuilder to monitor the construction of the boat. In addition, footage of the launch and testing of the boat was recorded. Several videos were made during/following the construction of training centers in Vučevica and Kula Norinska.

Dubrovnik Neretva region is processing a ten-minute film related to the implementation of the project in the partner area of Croatia.

3.2. Lessons learned in WP5 planning and implementation

Partners were asked what they would **do differently (if they could) in the implementation of WP5 activities**, as this work package is very important in the project since its results are designed to reach the identified target groups and the results of other work packages are presented:

- part of the activity would/should be carried out earlier. There were also misunderstandings in planning the order of activities because of poor communication during the period of absence of physical meetings due to COVID-19 (online meetings were organized)
- in the implementation of all activities and sub-activities, to include more volunteers who in any way contribute to the development of the civil protection system, as well as persons with disabilities, who are a particularly vulnerable group of society.

Partners were asked what they would **do differently (if they could) in preparing the application**

in part of WP5:

- there were periods when it was not completely clear whose responsibility it was to implement a particular part of the application. Probably, with a regular pace of meetings, these ambiguities would have been cleared up earlier
- to focus more on the creation of various multimedia materials that will be more interesting for children of elementary school age, but also on field work with children and training by operational forces of children
- generally, partners didn't notice significant issues with WP5 preparation within the project application.

Partners were asked what they see as **lessons learned** in implementation of WP5:

- due to objective reasons, some activities started to be implemented late. Activities that are prerequisites for other activities should be carried out as soon as possible.
- preparation and creation of quality communication materials that are later used in different forms of communication with the identified target groups.
- good communication and exchange of information is the most important, so that we know what equipment is available for responders to have adequate trainings on how to react in emergency situations.
- cross-border cooperation projects are extremely important and significantly contribute to the safety of residents of border regions, who are usually the most sensitive to various natural or human-caused accidents. The construction of infrastructural facilities, as in the Split-Dalmatia and Dubrovnik-Neretva County, undoubtedly raises the level of system readiness and operability. It is necessary to continuously equip the operational forces, given that the nature is threatened, but also the way of operation changes and adapts to new technologies. Professional training of the operational forces, in the areas, according to our own assessment, is necessary, extremely important, because a trained person in the civil protection system is the guarantor of the full functionality of the other resources at our disposal
- citizen activation is just as important as the acquisition of equipment and the construction of infrastructure

- citizens, especially children, should be involved as much as possible in activities related to raising citizens' awareness of natural and manmade disasters (fires, earthquakes, floods, wars...). It is necessary to direct more activities in this direction in view of climate change and increasingly frequent natural disasters in the world.

In the planning of all WP5 activities at the time of project application, is necessary that all partners are more actively involved. Its implementation, however, went without major difficulties. When preparing future project to have in mind lessons learned to prevent any implementation/organizational challenges.

3.3. Conclusion of online survey

WP5 provided “an umbrella approach” for dissemination and visibility of all project objectives and activities. In today’s world of modern communication technologies and social media, news travel fast but it is necessary to have tailored made information relevant to pre-identified project target groups. Online survey has showed to be a good method to collect primary data from all HR project partners. Data could be easily

interpreted in order to understand all WP5 activities with special emphasis on identified lessons and suggestions for improvement that could be used for future project applications and activities.

Final remarks

Firespill was well-leveled project that has positive implications for infrastructure (training centers), procurement of equipment and implementation of education, education of the population (children in schools and kindergartens) promoted comprehensively all activities that were interesting, both to the media and to the general public.

Project activities were organized by all HR partners and project deliverables were prepared and distributed in different forms, all in order to achieve project objectives and target values. There is room for improvement for deliverable 5.4.1 (Facebook or other social media close groups set up).

All given target values were achieved by HR partners. It is not easy to measure target value of general public that was informed about the project objectives and how many people were educated using promotion videos or with other type of communication channels. Most visibility from the media covered activities were in connection with construction works of training center in Večevica and Kula Norinska, handing over of equipment,

vessels and vehicles and training activities. It is necessary to have in mind that all project activities were local, regional and/or national officials took part, more media coverage were present.

Finally, below are listed recommendations to sustain and/or to improve future projects:

Sustain:

- Clear project application with description of target groups, project activities and deliverables
- Project deliverables should have implementation after project closure, i.e. training program and education materials
- Available online SharePoint for all project partners
- Communication and coordination among project partners.

Improve:

- Regularly update SharePoint, including monitoring template of WP activities, with all relevant materials/information from promotion activities
 - Joint promotion activities to be organize between the partners (especially neighboring regions)
- Use of social media for sharing educational materials (area of disaster management) aimed for children
- Use of external expertise, especially volunteers and NGO's for project implementation
 - Have a clear plan of WP activities with detailed description, timetable, leading partners and supporting partners - start with activities as soon as possible.

Nevertheless, Working package 5 Activation of Citizens Participatory Process and its Awareness Campaign have been successful, having in mind limitations due to COVID-19 pandemic and that several activities are in final phase of implementation.

