

Summary report on national forums for mutual sharing of experiences on relevant past disaster cases

Deliverable D.T1.3.1

Activity A.T1.3 Exchange events on relevant case histories of disasters & losses to Cultural Heritage value

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Summary: This document summarizes outcomes from national exchange events organised by PPs in their countries. Six such events were designed to discuss about past events of natural disasters that incurred damages to local cultural heritage and caused loss of their values. This action was also the start of setting-up a network linking CHEERS with relevant stakeholders not directly involved in the project but nevertheless important for germane design of deliverables and effective transfer of tools and knowledge into practice.

Introduction

Involving stakeholders is a key priority for CHEERS by which the project is manifesting the fact that participatory approach is the only reasonable way for a consortium dealing with socially relevant issues such as cultural heritage and natural hazards to effectively meet the project goals. Both aspects are strongly interwoven with communities' lives and directly and indirectly effect peoples' livelihoods.

Thus, one of the first action tasks of the first technical work package was to organise one-day workshops where PP of each of the six countries represented in CHEERS project invited an array of stakeholders from different fields either directly or indirectly related to cultural heritage and natural hazards. The ambition was to, first bring people together and to present CHEERS, and secondly to initiate a debate about the effects of natural hazards on cultural heritage in the Alps. Through discussion important issues of the current national/regional frameworks were highlighted and debate regularly focused on pinpointing positives and negatives from specific events of natural hazards. This is important for CHEERS as it indicates opportunities for the consortium to establish it self as a professional group competent to facilitate not only networking and discussion, but also to deliver knowledge and tools for local communities to use in trying to mitigate the negative effects of natural hazards on cultural heritage.

All six countries have organized such events and reported on the outcomes. This document tries to summarize notes that individual PP had provided to report on general and specific outcomes. It is structured so that it (1) first gives very short summaries of notes from individual countries by recapping main messages¹ and (2) secondly, highlight the commonalities among all six discussions.

Summaries of individual national forums

(in alphabetic order of names of the countries)

Austria

The event was held on 12th of Jun. 2019 and was focusing on past event and the best practice in cases of natural hazard events. Additionally, four more topics were debated, (1) whether protection of cultural heritage against natural hazards is a professional focus of attendees, (2) which are the greatest challenges in the field of protection of cultural heritage against natural hazards, (3) what kind of support attendees feel they need in this field, and (4) which experiences are attendees willing to share with CHEERS and what recommendations they can give in terms of efficiently addressing the issues of the field. Discussion was a more general one, mainly trying to set a clear image of stakeholders' needs and their potential contributions to the project.

France

Representatives of six different institutions met on 22nd of Jan. 2019 in Marseille (France) and discussed two important aspects of protecting cultural heritage against effects of natural hazards, the terminology (e.g. definitions) and organizational elements. Lots of focus was put on safeguarding plans in terms of how often organizations have it elaborated and has priorities in case of hazard events. However, plans are prepared on the level of individual monument or museum and not on wider spatial level (larger territory). It was suggested that it would be interesting to see such up-

¹ by using a combination of the GIST approach and Cornell method

scaled (valley of Ubaye) approach tested and implemented. Furthermore, debate was related also to the case of an accident in the cathedral of Saint-Etienne in 1985, where a failure in communication was evident.

Germany

The exchange event took place on 21st of Aug. 2019 with five stakeholders attending. The case around which the discussion developed was the mining museum Achthal in the community of Neukirchen. Fire brigade, the community representatives and the museum illustrated their roles in protection of cultural heritage and their jurisdictions. While discussing the hypothetical case of an emergency several gaps within the protocol of action could be highlighted. One of the key points that came out was the need for having a catalog of measures to protect the museum against natural hazards. This should be prepared by the museum and the community, with the participation of firefighters.

Italy

The event organized on 18th of Jun. 2019 by Italian PPs addressed a variety of different aspects of protection of cultural heritage against natural disasters. A great deal of discussion was devoted to organizational aspects with clear definition of roles of individual organizations, with Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities having a key part in the process of action. It was made very clear that the need to learn is one of the priorities of the field, especially on cultural heritage located in critically exposed sites, where prior action combined with effective response in case of an event is crucial. In fact, lack of knowledge on exposure and vulnerability as this is very natural hazard and type of heritage dependent, in one key aspect that needs to be addressed in future. Very different technical approaches call for specific expertise, which in turn entail wide participation. Apart from involving experts as stated above, engaging local communities as managers of cultural heritage or as those who act in case of emergency is a central element when dealing with cultural heritage exposed to natural hazard. One possible way to integrate such knowledge is also to design guidelines about cultural heritage, which would cover the organizational and operational aspects of action.

Slovenia

The workshop in Slovenia was focusing almost entirely on organisational aspect of emergency plans and available data layers. The system of risk assessment was exhaustively debated as there are risk assessments on national level for 15 different types of natural hazards in terms of their potential effects also on cultural heritage. However, cultural heritage is addressed rather generally like indication of the risk of being affected by the hazard. Risk assessment is also related to EU civil protection mechanism although planning of action in case of emergency on local level is not so well organized. Municipalities are relatively free in how they approach the issue of cultural heritage protection and some do not have specific plans of action. Larger institutions like museums have their own emergency plans and given very recent initiative from the Ministry of culture that all museums need to design emergency plans by a certain year. Stakeholders clearly expressed expectation for CHEERS to deliver data on vulnerability of cultural heritage as this is an important part of the overall puzzle still missing, apart from emergency planning, in Slovenia. The debate entailed also about the available databases, which could be used for the work of the project.

Overall summary

Organisational aspect was one of the primary topics of all five national forums. It seems there are lots of challenges to further develop and refine protocols of action when cultural heritage is at risk from natural hazards. At least seven clear indications (Figure 1) in all discussions (except for Austria) were given through debates that this is an important aspect. Equally highlighted was the issue of concept and definitions where several forums were initiating discussion on the basic definitions of either 'what is cultural heritage?' or 'which are types of cultural heritage?'. This was evident in cases of Austria, France and Slovenia.

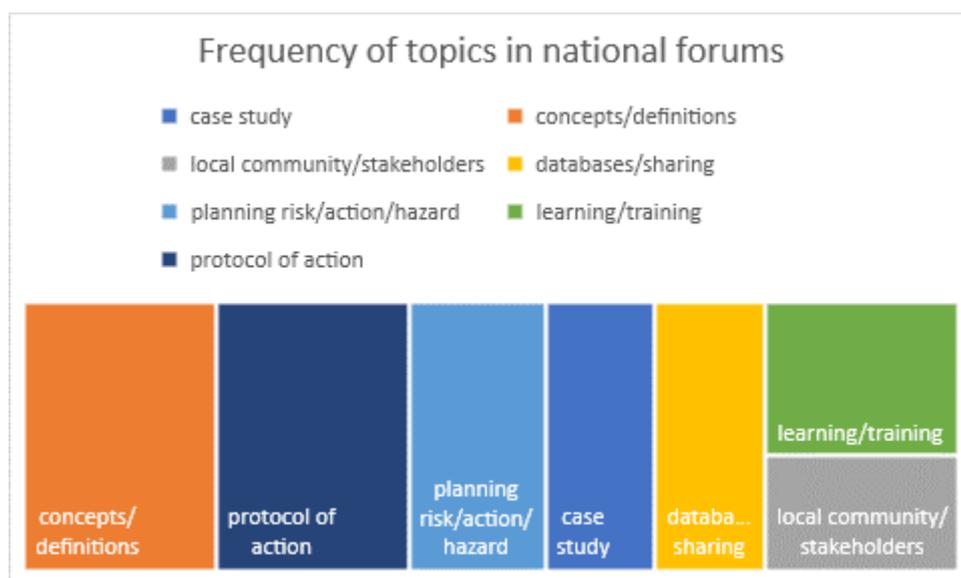


Figure 1: The summary of topics discussed in national forums

The planning aspect was one of the most heterogeneous one, as countries addressed very different issues – risk assessment (Slovenia), plans of action (France) and guidelines on how to act (Italy). It may have been that those terms are generally referred to similar things but are interchangeably used. Use of terminology consistently is something that needs to be pursued constantly.

All events were at least partly related to cases of past events, which was also one of the assumptions from the description of the task. And it makes perfect sense because it is very relevant to assess the protocol of action from past disasters. In this way gaps, deficiencies as well as 'success stories' are easier to pinpoint.

Very frequently the need to learn more (especially in Italian case) was highlighted. Given the variety of both natural hazards and types of cultural heritage, specialized knowledge is key when deciding on how to act in case of emergency and how to mitigate the effects of disasters in terms of restoration. Local communities can be a great source of such knowledge even they might not have professional skills.

Information flows and data sharing is probably one of the prerequisites of efficient action and this was highlighted several times. This suggests clear and commonly accepted protocol of collaboration among different relevant institutions and national forums have made it clear that this needs to be further refined in many countries.