

**TELL ME is a 36 months Collaborative Project, whose purpose is to provide evidence and to develop models for improved risk communication during infectious disease crises. By combining public health, social sciences, behavioural sciences, political sciences, law, ethics, communication and media, TELL ME aims to elaborate new and effective communication strategies that allow to deal with the uncertainties and challenges of risk communication during epidemic outbreak.**

## THE PAST

- **Communicating with the public** during infectious disease outbreaks has always been a demanding task for government officials.
- For centuries, public health authorities frequently faced this challenge by means of **denial, concealing of information and verbal reassurances**.
- Facing a pandemic was similar to being in a state of **war**, with the application of restrictive measures such as quarantine, isolation and compulsory hospitalization.

## THE PRESENT

- In a globalised society characterised by increasing mobility and unpredictable patterns in travel, such an approach is no longer acceptable. Recent epidemics clearly demonstrate that the trend is towards a **global health security regime**.
- **Human behaviour** has proved to be a critical factor in the transmission of an infectious disease, which can be modified by the source, content and nature of communication.
- Public health authorities are now re-thinking their **education and communication strategies**.

## THE FUTURE

- Pandemic outbreaks will be monitored and managed by the new information and communication technologies, such as **social networks and new media**, which contain both the elements of immediacy and two-way communication.
- The TELL ME project intends to elaborate and highlight advantages of effective **risk communication** in order to enhance the control of infectious disease epidemics and pandemics and minimize the risks of "adverse effects" during the outbreaks.
- The TELL ME project aims to develop a brand new **Communication Kit** for effective preparation and responses to pandemic threats.

## 3 QUESTIONS

**How** can public health communication persuade the population to take effective preventive actions (vaccination, antiviral therapy and non-pharmacologic preventive measures)?



**What** are the most appropriate communication methods to deal with complexity, uncertainty, ignorance, information asymmetries, overwhelming information, biased information, misinformation and malicious information?



**What** are the best communication strategies to improve vaccination compliance such as informing people about the efficacy of vaccines and assisting health professionals and agencies to engage with vaccine-resistant groups?



## LEARNING FROM THE PAST

Understanding how people have behaved during previous epidemics is important to develop new communication strategies. For this reason, TELL ME will collect and assess evidence about population behaviour in response to infectious diseases outbreaks, and how communication may influence this response. Several approaches and methods, ranging from systematic reviews of previous epidemic outbreaks to studies of narratives and urban myths regarding epidemics and vaccination, will be used.

### TELLME CONSORTIUM

- Centre for Science, Society and Citizenship (Italy)
- Vitamib (France)
- BMJ Publishing Group (UK)
- Cedarthree (UK)
- University of Surrey (UK)
- Istituto Superiore di Sanità (Italy)
- The European Union of General Practitioners/ Family physicians (Belgium)
- The Latvian Centre for Human Rights (Latvia)
- Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Brussels)
- National Disaster Life Support Foundation (USA)
- University of Haifa (Israel)
- Zadig (Italy)

#### Scientific coordination

Emilio Mordini

Coordination Officer

Dimitris Dimitriou

Administrative Coordinator

Olivier de Bardonnèche

Project Secretariat

infotellme@cssc.eu

## PREDICTING THE FUTURE OF RISK COMMUNICATION

Science is about prediction. By constructing a prototype of a computational method, TELL ME will simulate the actions and interactions of autonomous decision-making entities within a virtual environment during an epidemic outbreak, in order to observe the emergence of effects at the macro-level (agent based social simulation).

## NEW PERSPECTIVES AND CHALLENGES

The rapid progresses in biological sciences, computer sciences and information technologies, together with the naissance of a global public health governance, offers new opportunities to contain infectious disease outbreaks. However, these instruments also carry the potential to generate adverse effects. TELL ME aims to identify both the flaws and merits in these new opportunities, by addressing the role of stakeholders and social media, healthcare professionals communication responsibilities and digital resources for disease detection.

## INNOVATION AS THE BEST STRATEGY

The development of new communication strategies has a central role in the TELL ME project. Risk communication should not be restricted to emergencies but is also crucial before (to improve prevention) and after (to keep track of previous issues) an epidemic. Great attention will be given to support vaccination compliance. Poor or malicious information and false alarms have led to a diffused distrust towards vaccines, which has grown stronger in recent years. New approaches need to be developed to contrast this lack of information with honesty and transparency.

## DISSEMINATION AND POLICY DIALOGUE

By combining the use of web 2.0, mass media, TV networks, radios, research papers, conference presentations, TELL ME will spread the word about any findings or outcomes of the project. Special attention will also be given to any future "take up" activity that could be generated by the project.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE REGULARLY INFORMED ON THE PROJECT'S ACTIVITIES OR WOULD LIKE TO FIND OUT MORE ABOUT TELL ME,  
PLEASE REGISTER YOUR DETAILS AT: [WWW.TELLMeproject.eu/](http://WWW.TELLMeproject.eu/)