REPORT

Workshop on

Information to the Public – Warning and Alarm System, Technical Aspects

FINLAND

2000

Ministry of the Interior
FINLAND

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Foreword

Three workshops were organized in 2000 with the aim of providing a basis for creating and identifying mutual interests and joint actions at the European Community level within the major project "Information to the Public".

The three workshops concentrated on different aspects of informing and warning the public:

-information to the public during and after an accident (Germany)

-accident prevention and training and informing the public when no accident is at hand (Sweden)

-possibilities offered by modern technology and new innovations when warning and informing the public (Finland).

The purpose of the Finnish workshop was to bring together experts from Member States of the European Community to discuss and exchange information related to public warning, information and alarm systems. Other objectives of the workshop were to evaluate the impact of new information technologies on warning and alarm systems as well as their influence on the public. The workshop concentrated on technical aspects and new innovations in warning and information systems. Discussions also centred on how to harmonise the signals, signs and ways of informing the public and especially how to take care of special groups, for example tourists, the old and people with disabilities.

The workshop was organized by the Finnish Ministry of the Interior and the Emergency Services College and was supported by the European Commission.

A questionnaire on technical systems and arrangements for warning and informing the public was sent to participants in advance, and the organizers produced a summary on

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the basis of the answers. The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what kind of technical systems and arrangements are in use in Member States and what plans their are for developing them in the future.

Some observations based on the questionnaire were:

-public information and warning systems and methods differ between Member States

-some countries have no national warning system at all

-radio and TV are very important for informing and warning the public

-expectations concerning the use of new technologies and applications in the future are high.

A summary of the responses is enclosed.

The organizers would like to thank all participants, speakers and all those who contributed to the success of the workshop as well as its financial sponsors.

Workshop programme

28th – 29th September 2000

Chairmen: Mikko Jääskeläinen, Finland

Ray East, United Kingdom

Welcome and introduction

The workshop was opened by Janne Koivukoski, Director of the Telecommunications Unit, Ministry of the Interior, Finland, and Heikki Uusitalo, Deputy Principal of the Emergency Services College. Both extended a warm welcome to the participants and stressed the importance of the workshop in creating a secure future in Europe.

As the world becomes smaller and with increasing free movement and international contacts between people increasing, it is becoming necessary to harmonize the warning and alarm systems in use. For example, in certain situations the same acoustic and warning signals could be used, which would induce the same reaction everywhere. In future, increasing use should be made of the possibilities offered by new technology and media in co-operation throughout Europe, taking into account special groups, such as tourists, old people and people with disabilities.

Reference could be made to the implementation of the European emergency number throughout the EU. In Finland, the 112 emergency number was introduced in 1993.

Workshops of this type are excellent fora for exchanging information and experiences between experts from different countries and create a good basis for further work on the "Information to the Public" project, which is necessary for the creation of a common secure future.

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