

## FACTSHEET RAISING AWARENESS MEASURES

### Organisation and realisation of a public information event about heavy rain in Oderwitz

#### Where was it implemented?

Oderwitz, Saxony, Germany

#### Fields of action

Risk communication

#### Related to measure from the catalogue of measures

- Interactive communication and participation formats

#### Target group

Several target groups: general public (esp. citizens affected by floods), municipal administration, district administration, farmers, firefighters, media

#### Problem

Mutual accusation of guilt and failure. High risk awareness, but decreasing with elapsing time. High uncertainty about prevention measures and the best way to implement them.



Sharing of clear messages and dialogical communication with several stakeholders - not an easy undertaking.  
Source: Alfred Olfert, IOER

#### Description and aim

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2019, representatives of the “RAINMAN” project organised an → **interactive communication and participation measure** in the form of an information event for citizens affected by floods and other interested persons in Oderwitz. About 60 citizens as well as representatives from all targets groups (see above) took part in the workshop entitled “Facing heavy rain, floods and soil erosion”. Project partners of “RAINMAN” from the Saxon State Office for Environment, Agriculture and Geology (LfULG), representatives of several authorities and invited experts contributed to the workshop with local information about heavy rain and flood risk management, focussing on provision. The first part contained informative presentations, followed by a short break for bilateral interactions and dialogues. In the second part, participants were invited to take part in discussions organised in parallel working groups, focussing on private self-provision and provision by adapted agricultural methods.

The event aimed at providing transparency about the current state share in flood risk management. The Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Urban Regional Development (IOER) has → **visualised the local risk situation** on the basis of hazard maps. Furthermore, the aim of this event was to increase acceptance for planned measures amongst citizens and to bring responsible representatives, who must push pending measures forward, together. Even though Oderwitz and Leutersdorf were affected several times by floods, for the mayors it was especially important to ask for understanding, since floods and its proper management is a complex topic. The local situation in both municipalities is complex and problems of different sectors (climate change, intense farming, constructional changes) are overlapping. The event tried to point out that heavy rain is a natural phenomenon and floods cannot be avoided, but damages can. Damages and losses caused by floods during past years are the result of multiple cause-effect-chains. In order to reduce damages in the future, coordinated actions of several stakeholders are required. Affected municipalities and residents need to learn how to deal with natural hazards.

The event was intensively prepared in cooperation with the municipal authorities, and scientifically and medially accompanied and evaluated. Additionally, information were provided as → **material for reading**.

Effect of measure	
<p>The intense preparation of the event has brought a learning effect for employees of the municipal authorities. It provided orientation and motivated to gain a deeper insight into the topic. Afterwards, the municipalities of Oderwitz and Leutersdorf felt ready for diving deeper into the subject of emergency response and to make more efforts to push the topic forward.</p> <p>Amongst citizens, the event contributed to keeping memories of past flood events alive. Citizens were made aware of certain fields of responsibility (e.g. private self-provision) and knowledge about suitable measures and contact persons for further help and questions was imparted.</p> <p>Letters of complaint addressed to the Saxon government were formulated less accusingly after this event. Press releases by journalists who attended this event proved that central messages of the organisers were heard and understood by affected citizens, but did not achieve immediate acceptance.</p>	
Description of implementation	
Effect horizon: short-/medium-term	Involved stakeholders: general public (esp. citizens affected by floods), municipal administration, district administration, farmers, firefighters, media, educational institutions
Initiator / responsible: RAINMAN, municipal administration, district administration	
Lessons-learned	
<p><b>Main success factor:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining target groups</li> <li>Defining the aim prior to the event</li> <li>Formulation of clear messages</li> <li>Take up of local experiences</li> <li>Creation of suitable boundary conditions (location, programme, catering, ...)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Main challenge:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Getting through and be convincing</li> <li>Don't overload participants.</li> <li>Don't demand engagement only by others, commit yourself!</li> <li>Mediate in a conflict and adapt communication routines if necessary. An unbiased and competent view at the local situation from the outside might be helpful.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Synergies / beneficial aspects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Joint thematisation of heavy rain, floods and soil erosion</li> <li>Integration of other relevant topics, e.g. impacts of climate change, land use change, land use demands</li> </ul>	<p><b>Conflicts / constraints:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Litigations or other unresolved conflicts might become part of the event</li> <li>Distrust, emotional chargedness</li> <li>Job-related/legal interests (e.g. as a journalist, municipal representative and member of a party, entrepreneur, ... ) and personal concernment by floods are difficult to separate from each other</li> </ul>
Key message to others starting with a similar task	Contact
<p>Preparation and follow-up of such an event with several stakeholders should be understood as a part of implementation of a structural measure. The course of the information and participation processes can be surprising (e.g. flare-up of conflicts), which have to be compensated by competent moderators. Nevertheless: Don't hesitate to organise and host information events and dialogue formats for the public!</p>	<p>Municipality of Oderwitz Straße der Republik 54 02791 Oderwitz E-Mail: <a href="mailto:gemeinde@oderwitz.de">gemeinde@oderwitz.de</a></p>
Further information (in German)	<p>Sabine Scharfe (2019): Kommunikationsaspekte beim Starkregen- und Hochwasserrisikomanagement, in: DWA-Landesverbandstagung Sachsen/Thüringen 2019 - Tagungsband, S. 75 - 84.</p> <p>Jana Ulbrich (2019): Wie lebt man mit der Hochwasser-Gefahr?, in: Sächsische.de, 18.04.2019, URL: <a href="https://www.saechsische.de/plus/wie-lebt-man-mit-der-hochwasser-gefahr-5059869.html">https://www.saechsische.de/plus/wie-lebt-man-mit-der-hochwasser-gefahr-5059869.html</a>.</p>