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Abstract for Oral Presentation (maximum of 400 words)

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Access to Health Care and Psycho-Social Support in Cross-Border Crises: a European Perspective

In 2013 numerous rivers overflowed and flooded the surrounding areas after long-lasting, heavy rainfall in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and the Czech Republic. On March 11th, 2004, ten bombs exploded almost simultaneously in trains throughout Madrid, which carried thousands of people commuting to work. On November 6th, 2002 an airplane coming from Berlin crashed near Luxembourg City. These serious events all have in common that:

- several European countries and a large number of citizens from different countries were affected,
- there is a high probability of such events occurring in European countries and
- human suffering and despair with long term consequences followed.

Such natural, societal and technical disasters are major threats to public health (Leaning & Guha-Sapir (2013)). Either “*directly or through the disruption of health systems, facilities and services, leaving many without access to health care in times of emergency*” (WHO, et al., (2011)). Disaster preparedness has a major effect on the potential impact of a disaster on health and health systems and is a key issue for risk and damage reduction (UNISDR, Hyogo Framework (2005-2015); WHO, et al., (2011)). In order to further develop disaster and community preparedness, short and long-term impact analyses are necessary. By analysing short- and long-term consequences of disaster on health systems, risks can be identified, responses developed and contingency plans as well as laws and regulations adapted.

In this context access to medical and psycho-social interventions are key issues in mitigating impact and consequences of an incident. Disaster and contingency planning, alongside providing access to health care and psycho-social support remain primary responsibilities of the respective EU Member States. However, recent research shows that countries across Europe vary in their interpretation of providing such care and that implementation of evidence-based effective responses to disaster and adequate contingency planning is missing (Witteveen et al., (2012)). The EU funded, interdisciplinary project *PsyCris* (FP 7-SEC-2012-1, Project . 312395) – amongst others – aims at analysing the short and long-term consequences of disaster on health systems in order to improve coordination, preparedness, contingency planning and policy-making in European countries. A presentation of the *PsyCris* objectives will focus on the status quo of disaster and crisis preparedness in Europe regarding psycho-social support, followed by a discussion of the challenges of trans-boundary disasters on access to health care and psycho-social support by referring to specific case studies.

Literature:

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PSYco-Social Support in CRISis Management (PsyCris), FP 7-SEC-2012-1, Project no.: 312395, further information: <http://www.psy.lmu.de/psycris/projekt/index.html> or <http://www.psycris.eu/>.

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