



## ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE ESC WORKING GROUP 03-12 “INCREASING THE IMPACT OF SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION IN SEISMOLOGY”

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In summer 2012, not long before the L’Aquila sentence, the European Seismological Commission approved a working group aimed at increasing the quality and impact of scientific communication in seismology. By that time the discussion about the role of scientists in the flow of communication towards the society and especially the stake-holders was already ongoing; the L’Aquila verdict of October 2012, which convicted seven scientists for manslaughter, dramatically put more attention on the issue of communication. Not only the episode itself but the whole communication stream turned out to be not adequately organized for today’s demanding society where scientists are now held responsible for decisions they do not take themselves.

The working group aims to act as moderator and promoter of the discussion about public communication in seismology; the discussion is open to any interested seismologist and pursues the following general aims:

- enable society to obtain correct scientific and educational information, understand it and utilize it for adequate decision making;
- help our scientific community to be better (more easily and more correctly) understood by Society.

These very ambitious targets require a careful analysis of the fundamentals for a sound discussion on communication that can be summarized as follows:

- review the current status and practice of implementing (seismological) science for the benefit of society
- foster dialog with stakeholders (policy makers, authorities, media)
- perform a gap analysis on information (availability & understandability / perception).

In this study we present a summary of the activities conducted under the umbrella of the WG with the aim to add more elements to the items in the list above and to highlight the different approaches of each participating member (and country) to the discussion.

Despite the importance of the topic, not many specific activities to raise the awareness and importance of communication have been carried out in the seismological community in the last two years. The activities of the Italian community, the most hit by the L’Aquila sentence, however, are particularly relevant for a thorough discussion on the limits of communication when the two parties have different culture and expectations.

Currently the platform used for sharing opinions and comments among the WG is a mailing list.

Moving towards more modern and possibly more attractive interaction tools like social networks or blogs might benefit the exchange. Moreover, the discussion is limited to scientists, while

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the participation of journalists and policy makers would enlarge to alternative points of view. Both these aspects are important goals of the WG for the next future.