



## SHARE AND MOVE TO FACE NASTY BUGS

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### TELLME

**Website:**

<http://www.tellmeproject.eu/>

TELL ME is a 36 month Collaborative Project, aimed to provide evidence and to develop models for improved risk communication during infectious disease crises. TELL ME combined public health, social sciences, behavioral sciences, political sciences, law, ethics, communication and media, in order to develop original communication strategies regarding complicated messages and advice based on uncertainties, also addressing vaccine-resistant groups.

During infection outbreaks, one of the major problems has always been to communicate with the population in order to influence behaviors, reduce the spread of disease and avoid panic. For centuries the communication strategy adopted by authorities dealing with infectious outbreaks was chiefly based on denial and verbal reassurances, followed, in a further phase, by restrictive measures (quarantine, isolation, compulsory hospitalization) and sanctions for non compliant individuals. The increasing recognition that human behaviour critically influences infectious disease transmission led to concentrate efforts on education and prescriptive messages.

Yet recommendations were soon recognized as insufficient, people needed to be also ?persuaded? by emotional messages. The focus then shifted on public health propaganda. As the rapid and tumultuous progress in biological sciences, computer sciences, information technologies, and the naissance of a global public health governance, are offering new, surprising, opportunities for the containment of infectious disease outbreaks, there is the danger that we fail to take advantage of these opportunities, only getting their ?adverse effects?. We need instead to understand how maximizing opportunities and minimizing risks, notably we should learn to exploit the huge potential that the info society may offer in terms of evidence based and participatory communication. This is the first lesson, that one should get from communication failures occurred during the 2009 influenza H1N1 pandemic. A real paradigm shift has occurred, new challenges must be addressed, new models should be developed: this is the pivotal concept that has driven the consortium to propose the TELL ME project.

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Action plan on **Science in Society** related issues in **Epidemics and Total pandemics**  
European Commission

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