

# Public intentions and information needs following radiological terrorism

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# What do we want?

- We need – and expect - a compliant public
  - Follow official advise
  - Do not act according to emotions but to the facts we are telling them
  - Go where they are told to go, do not go where you are told to stay away from

# Research Questions

- Knowledge
  - Identify what knowledge the public has concerning an RED attack
  - Identify what the public knows about their governments' likely responses to such a scenario.
- Intentions
  - Identify what actions members of the public intend to take in the short- and medium-term should this scenario occur.
- Information and Trust
  - Identify what information the public will want to know should this scenario occur and who they would trust to give it to them.
- Assess how prevalent these behavioural intentions and information needs are in the UK and Germany.

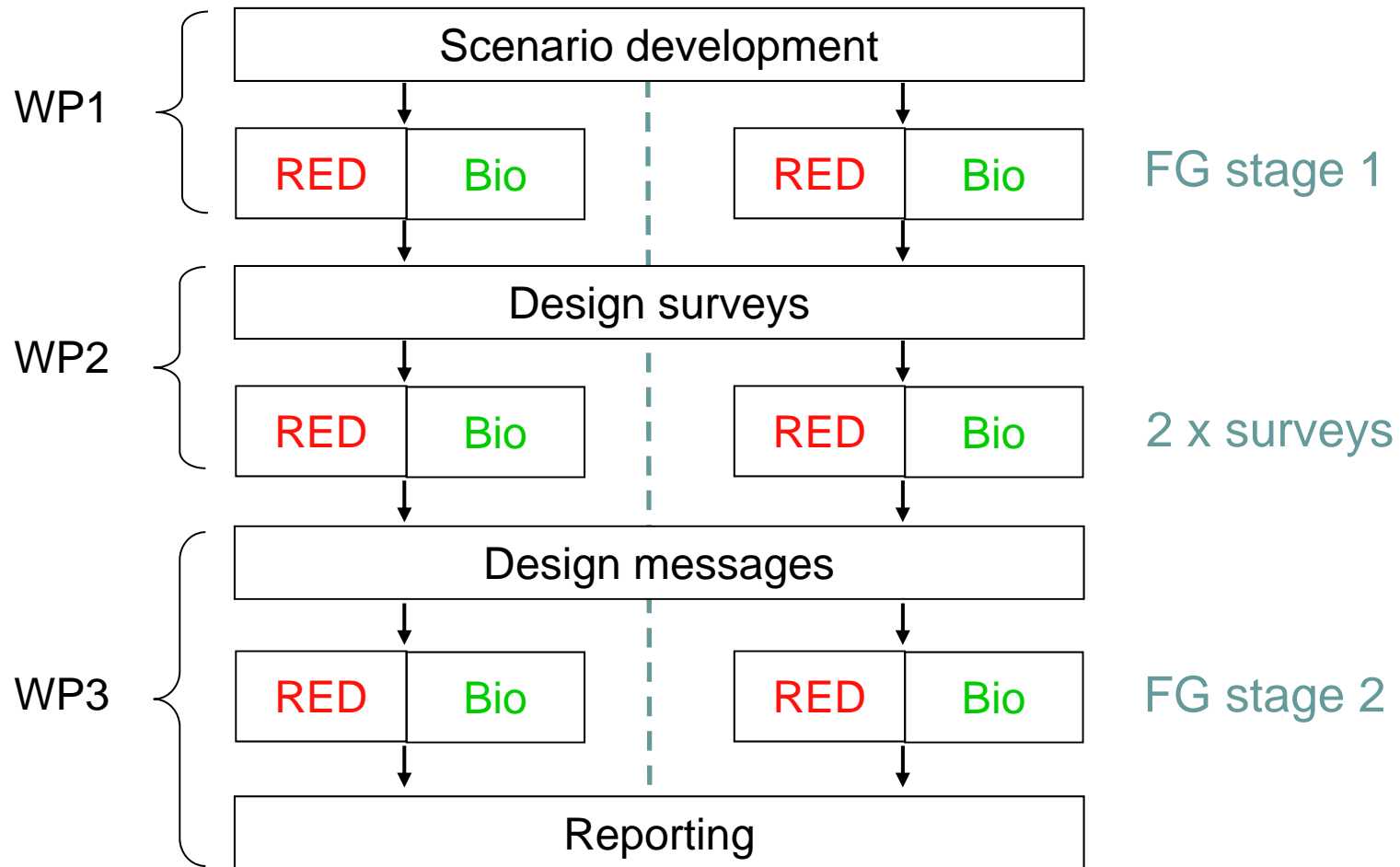
# Objectives

- **Design communication messages** that could be used to meet these information needs.
- **Test** whether **the messages** are clear and comprehensible to members of the public.
- **Test** whether the messages might **alter behavioural intentions** in the event of an RED attack.

# Project Design

UK

DE



# Scenario

- Radiological Embedded Device (RED)
  - RED is found in a commuter train in London / Stuttgart
  - Containing Iridium 192
- Stimulus in focus groups:
  - Newspaper article
  - Something has happened without further information (station evacuated)
  - Terrorist attack confirmed, further information
  - **Counter expert** to the official statements

# RED Injects



Inject 1



Inject 2 (1 week later)



Inject 3 (3 weeks later)





# **Qualitative Results**



*Identify what knowledge the public has concerning a RED attack*

- Overall low knowledge about scenario
  - References to radiation risks of power plants
  - Almost no knowledge about individual risk, treatment, contamination pathways
- Low knowledge about the likelihood and feasibility of such attacks

*Identify what the public knows about their governments' likely responses to such a scenario*

- Low knowledge
  - Public expects cordoned areas, even cities/regions
  - Hollywood - expectations
- Public ambivalent about what to expect from officials
  - Although they want to be informed in a transparent and open way, they do not expect that to happen.
  - Some understanding about secretive communication of officials

*Identify what actions members of the public intend to take in the short- and medium-term should this scenario occur.*

- RED:

- Intentions to change every-day life
- Higher awareness in public places
- Avoidance of public transport because of service problems
- Leaving the region / city

- Update May 2016:

- *Before* the recent increase of terrorist incidents, *over-estimation* of the impacts of the scenario
- *Today*: Underestimation of the scenario: Fatalism stronger than fear

*Identify what information the public will want to know should this scenario occur and who they would trust to give it to them.*

- The more concrete, the better!
  - Individual risk? Individual precaution? Cure in case of contamination?
  - Information on government's response
  - Information on suspected terror group
- Most trustworthy:
  - Government bodies and experts
- Least trustworthy:
  - Media and politicians
- Contradictions:
  - If asked who is *not* trustworthy, government bodies and experts were mentioned almost as often
  - Media was named as number 1 source of information

# Additional Results

- The regional vicinity of the attack created fear and shock („Possible in our neighborhood!“)
- Besides fear, participants felt....
  - powerless
  - disturbed
  - fear about peers
  - fatalistic
  - But also: scare tactics of the media



# **Quantitative Results**

# Survey

- N=4000 (2000 Germany, 2000 UK)
- CATI
- Scenario presentation through interviewer

# Survey Results

- Behavioral Intentions
  - Intentions to leave more prevalent for RED
- Education and leaving:
  - higher education = decreasing intention to leave
  - higher education = if leaving it's going further away
- Age / Education and going outside:
  - younger respondents less likely to avoid going outside
  - higher education = less likely to avoid going outside



# Survey Results

## ● Information behavior

- Younger respondents → internet as first source
- Higher educated resp. → internet as first source
- Lower educated resp. → tv as first source

## ● Knowledge

- RED untreatable / no cure
- No individual control felt
- Subjective rating about knowledge level high

# Stage 2 Focusgroups

- Missing information was designed into the 2nd tv clip, clip 1 and 3 not altered
  - Information on specifically on these parts mentioned missing before
  - Additional leaflet with very detailed information
- ➔ Does it change behavior?

# Stage 2 Focusgroups

- Summary:
  - transparent and exhaustive information does alter emotional response and behavioral intentions
  - additional information for validation purposes
  - Uncertainty of decisions decreased
  - Independent expert mostly seen as not trustworthy

# Summary

- Preparation is key:
  - The more I know, the more control I feel
  - The more decision – makers know about their audience, the more tailored the communication can be
- Trust must be build before the crisis
  - Competence, fairness, objectivity, consistency, empathy

# Summary

- Terror creates fear, not panic
- Fear can only be countered with *more* information, not with less
- Individuals need clear behavioral guidance to regain control
- Explanations and justifications necessary

# Summary

- Empathy necessary – apart from information
- Admit uncertainty
- Information needs change
- Contrasting effects need and can be used



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