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## **The International Emergency Management Society focus on cultural differences to be understood and included in the society's events, education and research programmes**

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**K. Harald Drager**

TIEMS President

Email: [khdrager@online.no](mailto:khdrager@online.no)

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The International Emergency Management Society (TIEMS) is a global forum for education, training, certification and policy in emergency and disaster management, with local chapters worldwide. Its events, education and research programmes are adding the local risk culture differences as a part of their event programmes, education curriculum and their research activity.

TIEMS was established in Washington, USA, as The International Emergency Management and Engineering Society (TIEMES) and registered in Dallas, Texas, USA, as a non-profit organisation in 1993. The name was later changed to TIEMS, which today is registered as an international, independent and not for profit NGO in Brussels, and as such is an important global communication platform for the international emergency and disaster management community to meet, network and learn about new technical and operational methodologies. TIEMS goal is through these events to influence policy makers worldwide to improve global cooperation and to establish global standards within emergency and disaster management, taking cultural differences into account. We are proud to say that a multitude of different nationalities participate in all TIEMS events. This gives a unique opportunity to exchange expertise and experience between different risk cultures in emergency and disaster management.

In order to reach out worldwide and include the cultural differences in emergency and disaster management, TIEMS is building an international expert network, where local chapters play an important role in establishing local TIEMS activity. TIEMS chapters are self-governed entities within TIEMS framework. Today chapters are established in Italy, Iraq, Romania, Be/Ne/Lux, India, Finland, Middle East and North Africa, Japan, Korea, Nigeria and West Africa, the USA and China. TIEMS is now in the process of establishing international task force groups, and two are already established, a TIEMS Medical Emergency Committee, and an Earthquake Early Warning Task Force Group. TIEMS main activities today comprise: International conferences, workshops and exhibitions worldwide, newsletter with latest news and articles of interest, chapter activity to stimulate local initiatives and activities, research and development projects and member service, international education, training and certification programmes, global young scientist network, and a TIEMS library with proceedings from TIEMS events. TIEMS also invites their experts to join TIEMS international pool of instructors, such that experience and expertise goes both ways learning from each other's cultures.

As education is considered key for emergency management, TIEMS has established an own education programme. The motivation for this is to put international focus on the

profession of emergency and disaster management; to contribute to an international standard in education, training and certification in emergency and disaster management; to take cultural differences into account in the curriculum; to contribute to the education in emergency and disaster management by promoting the state of the art in technology, systems and methods available, to contribute to education at all levels, from policy documents to courses in primary school education; to recruit international instructors to TIEMS pool; to establish a TIEMS certification of qualifications in international emergency and disaster management and, finally, to contribute to capacity building in countries where little or no education and training in this field is available.

In all TIEMS education and research programmes, and other TIEMS activities, cultural differences will be addressed as they need to be understood, communicated, accepted and included for a better emergency preparedness and management. There has been a focus on acknowledging the importance of risk culture difference in TIEMS worldwide activities in good faith for a safer world.

As president of TIEMS, I was a member of the advisory board of the Opti-Alert consortium. During this involvement, we became more aware about the importance of cultural, regional and social differences for sufficient emergency preparedness, alerting and crisis communication. We learnt a lot about cultural differences in risk perception and the consequences arising therefrom for more specific and targeted emergency management. We think this special issue is an important contribution to enhance our understanding at the interface of culture, disaster and the role of communication.

If you would like to find out more about TIEMS, please visit our website at: <http://www.tiems.org>.