

Emergency Preparedness Guide

For participants and coordinators in European mobility projects

About this guide

This guide has been prepared independently by emergency preparedness experts, drawing on recommendations from the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) for European mobility programmes. It covers what to pack, what to do in the first 72 hours of an emergency, how to respond to specific scenarios, how to use the EU-Alert / Cell Broadcast system, and how coordinators should manage their group in a crisis.

This is a standalone document. Keep it accessible at all times — not buried in your project folder.

1. THE EMERGENCY BAG

Key principle

The bag must be light, kept in an accessible place in your room, and grabbed immediately when you need to leave. If you have to think about where it is, it is not ready.

1.1 Hydration and Energy

Base your supplies on calorie-dense food and water filtration — not bulk.

- Water: 1–2 x 0.5 litre bottles (in side pockets).
- Water purification tablets or a LifeStraw filter — compact, allows safe drinking from any tap.
- Dense food: protein/energy bars; chocolate; nuts; crackers; dehydrated food.

1.2 Medications, First Aid and Hygiene

- Personal medication — minimum 3 days' supply. Pharmacies may be unavailable in the first days after a disaster.
- Basic first aid kit: bandages and plasters; antiseptic wipes; tweezers; protective gloves.
- Hygiene: wet and dry wipes; hand sanitiser gel; toothbrush and toothpaste; sanitary products.

1.3 Documents and Money (in a waterproof pouch)

You can use the same copies you pack in your main luggage.

- Copies of identity documents (ID card, passport) and medical documents (health card, insurance, prescriptions, medical history).
- Emergency cash: small denomination notes (local currency or Euro).
- Key emergency contacts: accommodation address, coordinator's number, your national embassy or consulate in the host country.

1.4 Equipment and Tools

- Fully charged power bank and charging cable.
- Small torch — do not rely on your phone's flash.



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- Multi-tool or knife.
- Whistle.

1.5 Shelter and Clothing

- Thermal survival blanket (silver-gold foil) — cheap, durable, protects against heat, cold and rain, takes almost no space.
- Spare clothes: one change of underwear and socks; a thermal layer or waterproof jacket.

2. THE FIRST 72 HOURS

1. Assess your position and follow local authority instructions:
 - If the location is safe: stay sheltered until further instructions. Do not expose yourself to external hazards.
 - If the location is unsafe: grab your Emergency Bag and move to the Assembly Point designated by your coordinator. Do not deviate from the route.
 - Local authority instructions take priority: follow them strictly, even if they differ from what you know from home.
2. Preserve your phone battery:
 - Switch immediately to the strongest power-saving mode.
 - Disable additional functions: mobile data, Wi-Fi, location services, Bluetooth. You can briefly turn on internet connection (2 minutes) to check for instructions from your coordinator.
3. Communicate your status:
 - First: contact your coordinator. Send a text message (SMS or WhatsApp) stating your location and whether you are injured.
 - Then: notify your family with a message such as "I'm OK, can't talk, will update soon."
 - Contacting the embassy and other institutions will be handled by the coordinator for the whole group.
4. Rely on verified information, not rumours:
 - Use only information received via EU-Alert / Cell Broadcast, directly from response teams, or through official channels of local institutions (Fire Service, Civil Protection, Police).
 - Panic kills. Ignore alarmist messages or posts and do not share information from unofficial sources.
5. Manage your resources efficiently:
 - If you are forced to shelter in place, you may begin using water and food from your Emergency Bag.
 - Do not use everything in the first few hours. You must be prepared to last at least 3 days.

Stay calm!

In an emergency, do not hesitate to call the local emergency number or request help from the relevant authorities. The single emergency number across the EU is 112 — free from any phone, at any time.

3. EMERGENCY RESPONSE CARDS

Print these cards. Laminate them. Keep them with you at every project activity.

CARD A — FIRE

1. Sound the alarm. Press the nearest alarm button and shout "FIRE!" repeatedly to alert others.
2. Evacuate immediately. Leave everything behind — save your life.
3. Check the door before opening. Touch the handle or door with the back of your hand. If either is hot, or if there is smoke around the door, do not open it — the fire is on the other side. Find another exit.
4. If there is smoke, get down on your hands and knees and crawl. Smoke kills faster than flames.
5. If you cannot get out: seal gaps around the door with a damp cloth, including the keyhole. Open the window, call 112, and stay at the window — wave a white or brightly coloured item (e.g. a bedsheet) or use a torch.
6. Never take the lift. Always use the stairs.
7. If your clothes catch fire: stop, drop, and roll. If you cannot extinguish them this way, smother the flames with a (damp) blanket or towel. Cool burns with water for 3–5 minutes. Do not apply anything to the wound.
8. Move to the Assembly Point and STAY OUTSIDE. Do not go back in, regardless of what or who was left behind.

CARD B — MEDICAL EMERGENCY: UNCONSCIOUS PERSON

1. Your safety comes first. Only approach when the area is safe.
2. Check the victim's response. Call out loudly and clearly, while gently shaking their shoulders.
3. Call 112 and ask for help. Designate a specific person nearby to call 112. If you are alone, call and put the phone on speaker.
4. If they are breathing normally but unconscious: turn them immediately onto their side. Wait for the ambulance and check every 2 minutes that they are still breathing.
5. Check for breathing for 10 seconds. Tilt the victim's head back, lift the chin, and bring your cheek close to their face. Look at the chest, listen, and feel for air on your cheek.
6. If they are not breathing or breathing abnormally: begin chest compressions. Place the heel of one hand at the centre of the chest; place your other hand on top, fingers interlocked. Keep elbows straight.

7. Compress hard and fast. Do not stop unless the ambulance arrives, the victim starts breathing, or the situation becomes dangerous. If you tire, designate someone to take over compressions.

CARD C — NATURAL DISASTERS

General rules for the most common environmental hazards.

General rules for all natural disasters

- Listen to official alerts. Keep your phone on to receive government alerts via EU-Alert / Cell Broadcast with evacuation instructions.
- Evacuation: take your Emergency Bag only if the building is damaged or authorities have ordered evacuation.
- Communication: notify your coordinator with a short message about your status and location. Do not make any calls except 112 when life is in immediate danger.

I. Earthquake

1. In a building: immediately drop to the floor, move away from windows and tall furniture, take cover under a solid desk or table (Cover) and hold onto its leg (Hold On). Stay inside; do not use lifts or stairs.
2. In a lift: press the emergency button. When it stops, exit as quickly as possible and take cover.
3. In a car: pull over as far from buildings as possible without blocking traffic.
4. In a public space: stay as far as possible from buildings, windows and shelving units.

II. Flood

1. Seek higher ground quickly — a nearby elevated area, upper floors, or the roof of a building. Wait there for rescue teams.
2. Do not walk or drive through floodwater. 15 cm of fast-moving water is enough to knock you off your feet.
3. Do not touch electrical equipment if you are wet or standing in water.
4. Call for help if trapped. Use the whistle from your Emergency Bag.

III. Severe Storm

1. If outdoors: seek shelter immediately. If none available, crouch down with your head between your knees and hands covering your ears and head. Do not lie flat on the ground.
2. If indoors: shelter in an interior room on the ground floor or basement, without windows — such as a bathroom or interior corridor.
3. Unplug electrical appliances and do not use the bath, shower or running water due to the risk of electrocution.
4. Stay indoors until the authorities give the all-clear, or at least 30 minutes after the last thunder.

CARD D — ARMED ATTACK

Rare events, but you must be prepared at any time and in any place.

RUN — HIDE — ALERT

1. RUN towards a safe place

- Far better than surrendering or negotiating.
- Urge others to leave with you, but do not wait for those who hesitate.
- Leave all belongings behind.
- If you cannot do this safely...

2. HIDE if there is no safe route

- Better than confronting the attacker.
- Avoid exposed areas — if you can see the attacker, they can probably see you.
- Avoid dead-end spaces with no other exit.
- Lock and barricade the entrance to the room.
- Stay on the floor, behind solid walls, away from all windows and doors.
- Stay completely silent. Turn off anything that makes noise and put your phone on silent — including vibration.

3. ALERT — call 112 when it is safe to do so, reporting:

- What is happening and the type of attack.
- The exact location or area.
- Where you last saw the attacker(s) and which direction they were heading.
- Number of attackers and details: description, clothing, weapons.
- Victims, type of injuries, any hostages.
- Access routes into the building.
- Stop others from entering the building if it is safe to do so.

4. When law enforcement arrives:

- They may treat you roughly — this is normal given the situation.
- Listen and follow all instructions.
- Keep your hands visible and empty at all times. Make no sudden movements and do not raise your voice.

CARD E — PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY / EPIDEMIC

Protect yourself and those around you.

- 1.** Assess the risk. Identify symptoms and their severity. Check whether there are official alerts or recommendations from local authorities or health organisations. If you or someone in the group has severe symptoms (breathing difficulties, altered consciousness, very high fever), seek emergency medical care.



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2. Isolate. Limit contact with others and avoid communal spaces. Apply basic hygiene: hand-washing; covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing; wearing a face covering if advised.
3. Stay put. Do not use public transport if there is a suspicion of contagious illness. Do not go directly to a pharmacy or hospital.
4. Notify your coordinator. Send a detailed message with your symptoms so they can act in the interests of the other participants too.
5. Notify local authorities. Contact the public health service, the designated health information line, or 112. Report symptoms, travel history and any contacts with confirmed or suspected cases.
6. Follow official instructions strictly. Wait for medical personnel in your room. Follow all guidance on testing, quarantine or isolation. Do not attempt to evade health controls.
7. Monitor your symptoms and seek medical help if your condition worsens.

4. EMERGENCY CONTACTS AND 112

112 is the single standardised emergency number across the European Union, used to request help in any emergency situation.

Key facts about 112

- Available for: ambulance, fire service, police and any other emergency intervention.
- Free of charge from any mobile phone or landline, regardless of network operator, credit or subscription status.
- Available 24/7. Operators are trained to handle emergency calls efficiently.
- Available without SIM or credit — in most EU countries you can call 112 even with no SIM card, as long as there is a signal.
- Weak signal: if the signal is poor, try moving to an area with better coverage.
- Misuse is illegal and endangers lives. Use 112 only for real emergencies.

When you call 112, provide:

- What has happened (type of emergency).
- The exact location of the emergency.
- The number of people involved.
- Other relevant details (victims, immediate hazards).

5. EU-ALERT AND CELL BROADCAST

The EU-Alert system allows emergency messages to be broadcast directly to all mobile phones in an affected area via Cell Broadcast technology. This is the European standard; national implementations may have different names (e.g. NL-Alert, IT-Alert, FR-Alert, DE-Warn) but all work on the same principle.

How Cell Broadcast works



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- Messages are broadcast by mobile antennas in a selected geographic area to all compatible phones — no phone number or personal data is required or used.
- Your phone receives the alert automatically if it is switched on and has a signal (2G/3G/4G/5G).
- No app installation is needed. Works on any mobile phone, not just smartphones.
- Works regardless of your SIM card's home country — if you are in the affected area and have a signal, you will receive the alert.
- No cost. No subscription needed.
- A phone that has received an alert will not receive the same message repeated.

Alert categories

EU-Alert messages are divided into four levels:

1. Extreme alerts: issued for imminent risk (e.g. red weather codes, tsunامي). Very loud sound at maximum device volume.
2. Severe alerts: more discreet sound, similar to a standard notification. Issued for orange weather codes and similar warnings.
3. Missing child alerts: discreet sound.
4. Public safety alerts: no sound (e.g. armed attack alerts deliberately make no noise, so as not to reveal the location of recipients).

What to do immediately when you receive an alert

1. Read the message carefully. Find out what type of alert you have received and what the specific recommendations are.
2. Stay calm. Panic leads to poor decisions.
3. Check official sources. Consult the official websites or communication channels of local authorities (Civil Protection, Fire Service, Police) for additional information and updates.
4. Follow the instructions. Whether it involves evacuation, sheltering in place, or other safety measures — follow the guidance given in the alert.
5. Stay informed without exposing yourself to risk. Pay attention to information from those around you but do not put yourself in unnecessary danger.
6. Call 112 if you need help or observe an emergency situation.

Enabling Cell Broadcast on your phone

On most devices, emergency alerts are enabled by default. If you want to verify or enable them:

Android

Steps may vary slightly depending on manufacturer (Samsung, Xiaomi, Motorola, etc.):

1. Open Settings.
2. Go to Apps and Notifications or Connections.
3. Search for and open Wireless Emergency Alerts or Cell Broadcasts.
4. Enable the desired options (e.g. Extreme Emergency Alerts, Severe Emergency Alerts, AMBER alerts).

iOS (iPhone)



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On Apple devices, alerts are usually enabled from the factory. To verify:

1. Open the Settings app.
2. Tap Notifications.
3. Scroll to the bottom of the screen to Government Alerts / Emergency Alerts.
4. Make sure the toggles for each alert type are switched on (shown in green).

6. PRE-DEPARTURE CHECKLIST

I. Documents

So you can prove your identity immediately, at any time.

IN ORIGINAL — on you, never in your main luggage

- Identity document (ID card or passport, valid for at least 6 months beyond your return date).
- European Health Insurance Card (EHIC).

PHYSICAL COPY — one copy in main luggage; one copy left at home with family

- Identity document.
- Insurance policy.

DIGITAL COPY AVAILABLE OFFLINE — scans or photos saved on your phone

- Identity document.
- Flight ticket or travel confirmation.
- Insurance policy.

II. Communication

Stay connected; be ready for any situation.

- Roaming activated (verify by calling your operator or through their app).
- Emergency alerts enabled (Cell Broadcast / EU-Alert).
- Offline map of your destination area (downloaded in Maps).
- Key contacts saved: 112 (EU emergency number), your host coordinator's details, your national embassy or consulate in the host country.

III. Health

Medical systems differ from country to country — be prepared for the first few days.

- Personal medication: your own treatment (allergies, asthma, chronic conditions), with doses for the entire period, in your carry-on luggage.
- Medical letter or prescription for special medications: from your doctor, ideally in English.
- Basic kit: painkiller, digestive remedy, cold medication.
- Travel insurance: the 24/7 assistance number from your policy, saved in your phone.

IV. Safety

If technology fails or your luggage is lost.



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- Accommodation address and transport to get there: written on paper.
- Emergency bag: in case your main luggage is lost, keep a spare change of clothing, underwear, toothbrush, charger and power bank in your day bag.
- Emergency cash: a small amount kept separately from your main wallet, usable in case of theft.

Source: recommendations by Erasmus Student Network (ESN) for European mobility programmes.

7. ANTI-DISINFORMATION CARD

10 SECONDS BEFORE ANY SHARE

Disinformation in crisis situations is deliberately designed to trigger strong emotions such as fear, anger or hatred — forcing you to share before you think. Social media algorithms make this worse, promoting exactly these types of posts based on reactions.

If a piece of news or a clip provokes a strong emotional reaction or a sense of extreme urgency: stop for 10 seconds and check the source before doing anything else.

1. Use only official sources

During an emergency, social media algorithms will promote sensationalist posts — not necessarily the truth. Rely exclusively on:

- Government emergency alerts received on your phone (EU-Alert / Cell Broadcast).
- Official, verified channels of local Civil Protection or Police.
- Direct instructions from your local coordinator.

2. Stop the rumour chain

Alarmist messages of the type "someone inside said that..." — especially voice messages distributed on WhatsApp that cannot be verified — generate unjustified panic. People can end up making dangerous decisions such as crowding unsafe evacuation routes, worsening the event.

Do not pass them on. Unverified information must stop with each of us.

3. Message instead of calling

In the first moments after a disaster, networks collapse because everyone is calling simultaneously — or worse, doing live streams on social media. Turn off mobile data to save battery.

Communicate exclusively via SMS or short text messages over Wi-Fi if the network is safe (e.g. WhatsApp). A simple message "I'm OK, can't talk" to one person at home is enough.

No voice calls (except 112). Never video calls. High-bandwidth frequencies must be kept clear for the communication of emergency response teams.

4. One call to 112 per group



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If 5 people witnessing an incident all call 112 simultaneously, 5 operators will be occupied for a single incident while another real emergency waits. If you are in a group: designate one person to make the emergency call.

8. COORDINATOR AND DSL CHECKLIST

I. Preparation — Before Departure

- Medical information and consent. Collected confidentially (and read) the participants' forms covering: severe allergies; chronic conditions; chronic or emergency medication (EpiPen, insulin); specific dietary requirements.
- Secure database. Saved copies of identity documents, insurance policies and family emergency contacts in an encrypted folder or secure physical file.
- Institutional contacts. The 24/7 duty number of the National Agency or funder, and the emergency number of your national embassy or consulate in the host country, saved in your contact list.
- Communication tree. Created a group (e.g. WhatsApp) with all participants, tested to confirm it sends instant alerts.

II. Securing the Location — On Arrival

- Exact address visible. Clearly posted the full accommodation address in a visible area, so any participant can dictate it without hesitation when calling 112.
- Visual audit. Physically walked the location to confirm emergency exits are unobstructed and to identify the positions of fire extinguishers and first aid kits.
- Assembly Point. Established a safe outdoor meeting point in case of emergency, presented to participants on the first day.
- First aid delegation. Designated a member of the organising team trained in first aid.

III. During an Emergency

- Your safety comes first. Assess the risk and do not enter dangerous areas — an injured coordinator reduces the group's chances of survival.
- One caller to 112. Call 112 yourself or clearly designate one person to do so.
- Control communications. Firmly instruct participants not to post photos, do live streams on social media, or call home during the incident.
- Roll call (mandatory attendance). Immediately after evacuation to the Assembly Point, call the register. Everyone stays in position until all are accounted for.
- Transfer medical data. In the event of a medical emergency, immediately communicate the relevant medical history of the person affected to the emergency team (from the information collected in Phase I).

IV. After the Crisis — When Everything Is Under Control

- Official communication with families. Once the situation is stable, only you or the organisation will contact the families of those affected, to provide clear, verified information.
- Hierarchical notification. Immediately inform your organisation's leadership at home so they can activate internal crisis procedures.
- Incident report. Complete the official document as quickly as possible with objective data: exact times, sequence of the incident, decisions taken and actions carried out.



Attribution

This guide has been prepared drawing on recommendations from the Erasmus Student Network (ESN) for European mobility programmes. All emergency procedures are consistent with EU-wide standards. Always follow the instructions of local authorities in the country where you are located.



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