

METEOALARM IN THE FIRST MONTHS: GROWING NUMBER OF VISITORS

Since the official start of Meteoalarm on the 23rd of March (World Meteorological Day) the site is getting more and more visitors from all over Europe. Everyday between 10.000 to 30.000 visitors click on. This growing number of visitors represent 1 to 4 million hits a day.

Much media attention at the launch

The launch for this new and unique facility on upcoming severe weather was very successful, we received large media coverage connected to this event. One of the big challenges in constructing the website was to communicate all this information on severe weather, originating from many different NMS's, in a transparent way without language being a problem. Also much effort was put in presenting a coherent footprint of the actual and forecasted awareness situation on the website.

The launch of the site was in El Escorial near Madrid. To get best media attention a Media action plan was developed well in advance. Through International press agencies and European press services and with the help of the European press officers at the National Meteorological Services and at the World Meteorological Organization the news of the launch was spread in the media all over Europe. The news was picked up on Radio and TV and in many European newspapers and magazines. The German edition of the Financial Times even dedicated a whole page on Meteoalarm.



Meteoalarm.eu was launched in the presence of the general public, authorities and press. The site is a unique initiative from the Eumetnet organisation, the Network of European meteorological services within the World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

Grey scale map for colour-blind

Communicating with colour-blind people was one of the items in the programme. A enthusiastic reaction came from the colour-blind organisation spokesman in the Netherlands: "the grey-scale map of Europe is a very suitable alternative for the colour map", he told to the National Press Agency, ANP. Though in many European countries the site is frequently visited, most visitors come from the Netherlands, Belgium, Finland, Greece and Austria.

Coming up

The number of European countries sharing the programme is still growing. In June 2007 the number of sharing countries is 20: Austria, Greece, Ireland, Belgium, Iceland, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, Luxembourg, Denmark, the Netherlands, Spain, Norway, Finland, Portugal, France, Sweden, Great Britain, Hungary and Cyprus. The following countries are expected to join Meteoalarm.eu soon: Croatia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Malta, Slovakia and Slovenia. Most of them run already test versions of their colour assignments.

Attention on Meteoalarm.eu on national level

In order to strengthen the attention for meteoalarm.eu, a trigger mail will be send to all press officers at the NMS's in Europa whenever at least three countries are coloured orange and/or red. The NMS press officers are asked to use this information to place a news item on their NMS website which links towards meteoalarm.eu. Additional media actions by NMS press officers are encouraged whenever these intense and widespread situations are expected within the meteoalarm domain.

The resilience of our meteoalarm website has improved significantly by bringing in additional server capacity and by redesigning the software processes. The resilience has improved since by a factor 40 !!

Other points of attention

Looking at the rapid growth of Meteoalarm visitors the Programme management and Expert members are convinced that Meteoalarm even has got much more potential. We will put additional efforts in reaching these potential users.

To avoid "white" website colouring please pay attention to the continuity of your XML data update. Any lack of information has to be minimized.

Dynamic text block: please pay attention to the dynamic text blocks on the 3rd regional website level. For some countries this information on intensity of phenomena is missing. For many website users this dynamic information is of high importance.

More intranet discussions between meteorologists: we want to encourage the use of the intranet forum between meteorologists, during the onset phase of extreme weather events. This in order to improve the quality of colour assignments.

Prominent linking: please put a prominent link towards Meteoalarm.eu on your NMS website, preferable on the homepage of your website. At this moment on some NMS websites the www.meteoalarm.eu link is too difficult to find.

There is also the possibility of a "deep link" (a life picture of the Meteoalarm European map on your national website):

The following formats can be linked: (pixel width)

100 pix: <http://www.meteoalarm.eu/shapefiles/Europe/EuropeToday0color100.gif>

150 pix: <http://www.meteoalarm.eu/shapefiles/Europe/EuropeToday0color150.gif>

200 pix: <http://www.meteoalarm.eu/shapefiles/Europe/EuropeToday0color200.gif>

Consistent colour assignments: major point of attention in the upcoming year will be the coherent colour assignment strategy throughout the Meteoalarm domain. We want to synchronise meteoalarm colour assignments by using climatological criteria such as return periods of extreme weather events in all European regions.

European map of regions: the programme management is convinced that showing a coloured European map of regions will improve the information impact significantly. A test demo version is already running on the Intranet system. However we can only open this to our general users after additional actions on colour assignment coherency and further steps of harmonisation are implemented.

Archive of warnings: an interactive tool to retrieve historic maps of colour assignments is available in the Intranet

Warning statistics: the evaluation tool is under construction, a first version can be seen in the Intranet under "warning statistics". The full functionality of this tool should be completed in the next weeks.



GMES: For the future co-operation with the EC-programme on Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) we foresee the necessity to lengthen the lead time period of colour assignments up to at least 72 hours. In this context the possibility of a second (pass word protected) website specially devoted towards GMES and Civil Security on national and European (MIC) levels will have to be discussed.

European Commission well informed: The programme manager, Michael Staudinger, has introduced Meteoalarm to European Commission representatives. Great interest was expressed from the part of the commission (especially the Monitoring and Observation Centre, (MIC)). More formal procedures will be established after the EUMETNET Council meeting.

METEOALARM was also presented at the "EU- Seminar on early warning systems" in Albufeira in July 2007 on the occasion of the Portuguese EU presidency and found wide interest, as the commission and the relevant DG's focus more and more on coherent multihazard systems.

ECAM/EMS meeting: Meteoalarm will be the subject of at least two presentations on the upcoming ECAM/EMS meeting (from 1 to 5 Oct in El Escorial, Spain).

Meteoalarm was also invited by ECMWF to be presented at the 11th workshop of meteorological information systems.

For the Meteoalarm expert members and advisory members agenda: next Expert meeting is planned for Sunday - Monday 21st and 22nd October in Dublin.