



Myndigheten för  
samhällsskydd  
och beredskap

# Using Bliss symbolics to advance emergency information – results from a co-creation workshop with user experts

Vinblad, E. & Osvalder, A-L.



LUND  
UNIVERSITY

**FURUBODA**



CHALMERS  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

## **Elin Vinblad**

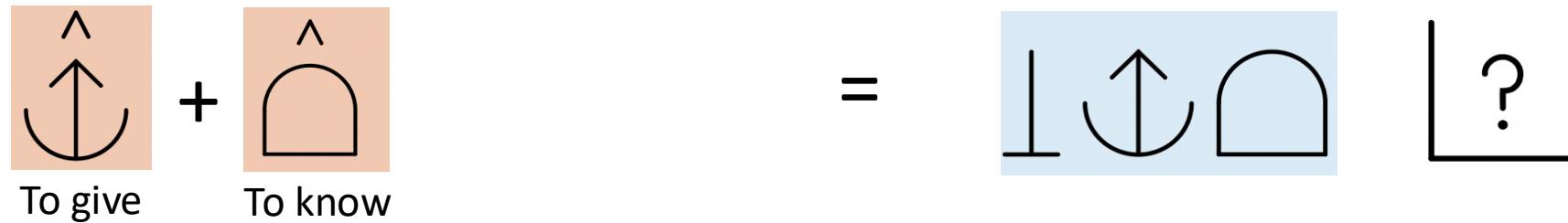
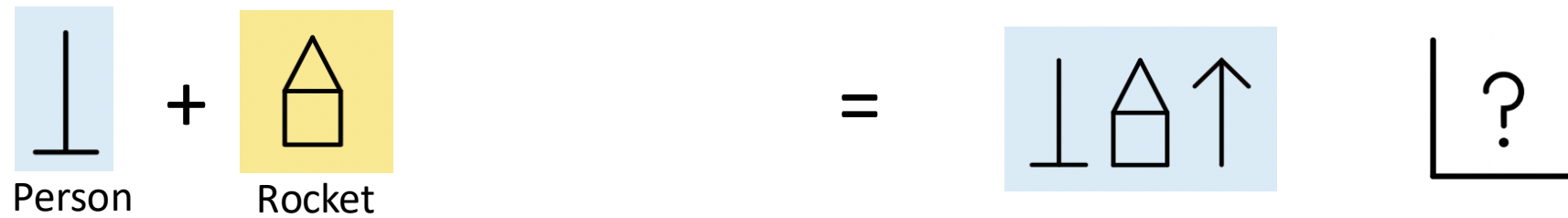
SLP, PhD student Chalmers University of Technology  
Head of Furuboda Department of Disability Rights

## **AnnaLisa Osvalder**

Division Design & Human Factors, Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg,  
Sweden



# Bliss symbolics – an international symbol-based language



# From passive recipient to an active resource in the crisis management systems



Myndigheten för  
samhällsskydd  
och beredskap



**LUND**  
UNIVERSITY

**FURUBODA**

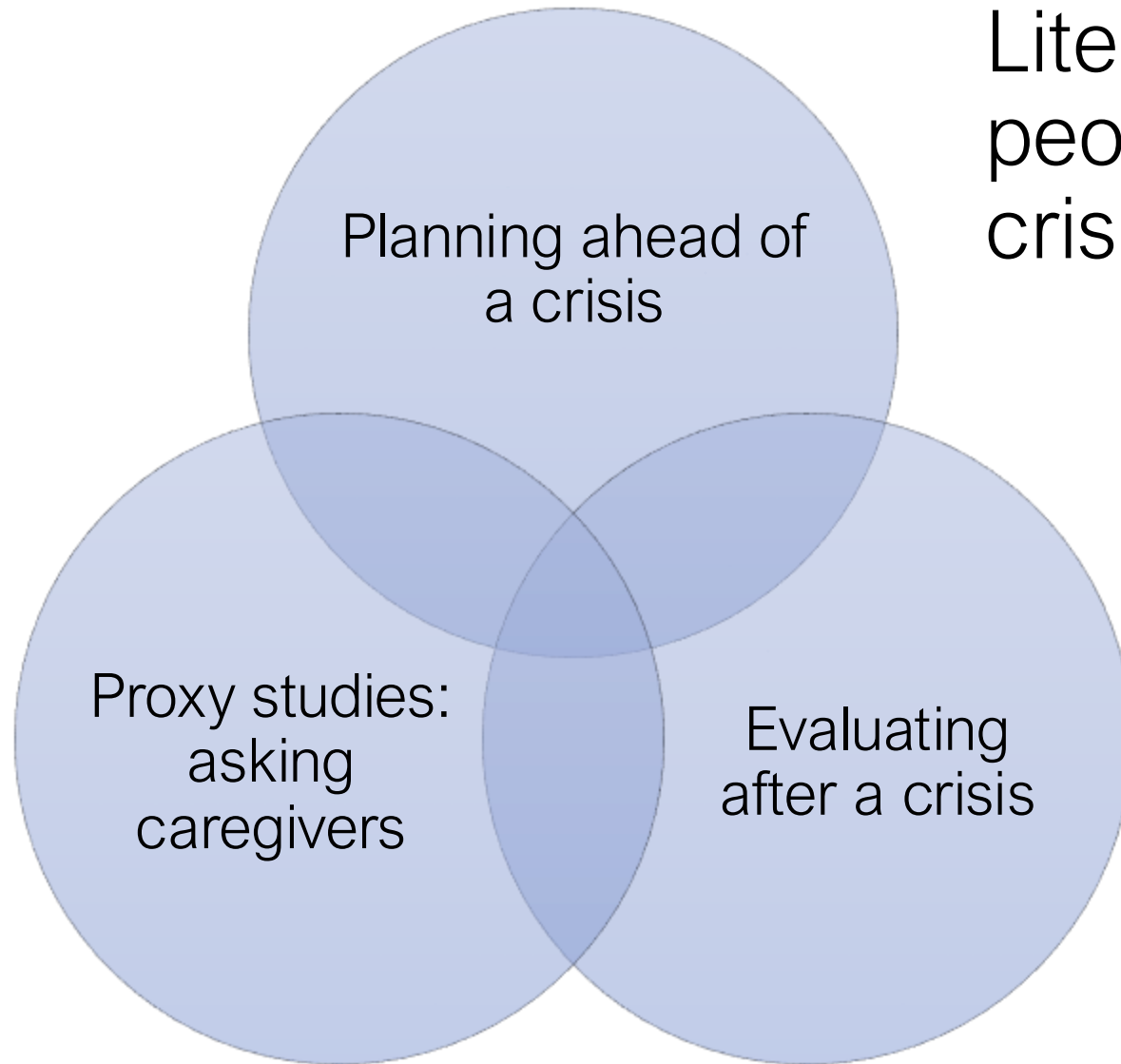


**CHALMERS**  
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

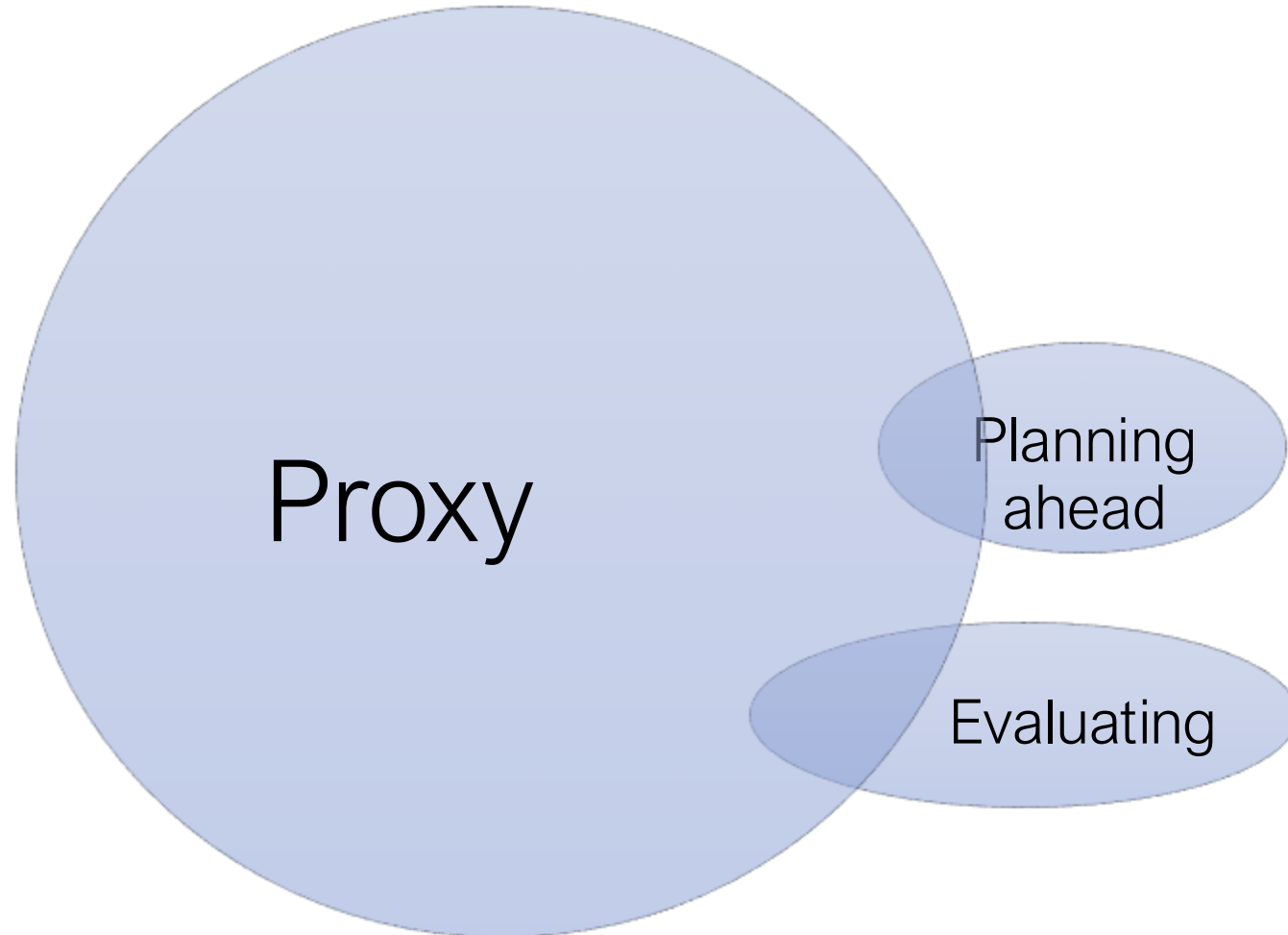
# Covid 19 information among people with disabilities

- difficulties **finding**, **understanding**, and **following** directives independently
- dependent on others to provide and augment information
- lower compliance among those with weaker support systems
- other people acted as gatekeepers
- affected by interpreters' personal attitudes

# Literature on the occurrence of people with disabilities' within crisis communication work



...but unevenly distributed.



Why?

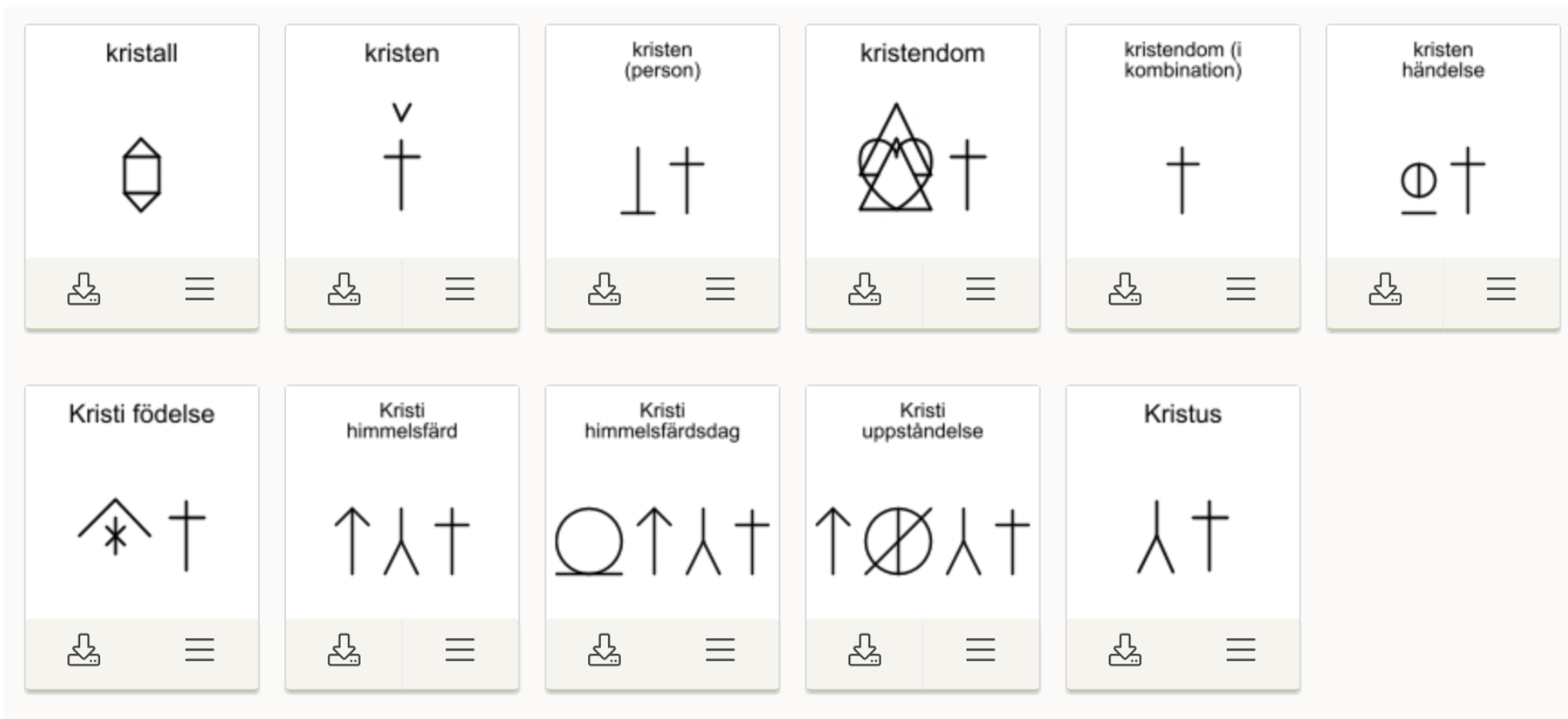


# Bliss Symbolics: limitations in Swedish

- The Swedish translation from Bliss International is smaller, primarily a vocabulary put together by the Ministry of Special Education for school subjects.
- Many topics are missing, for example words relating to crisis and emergencies (other than health-related).



# Vocabulary limitations: looking for crisis [kris]

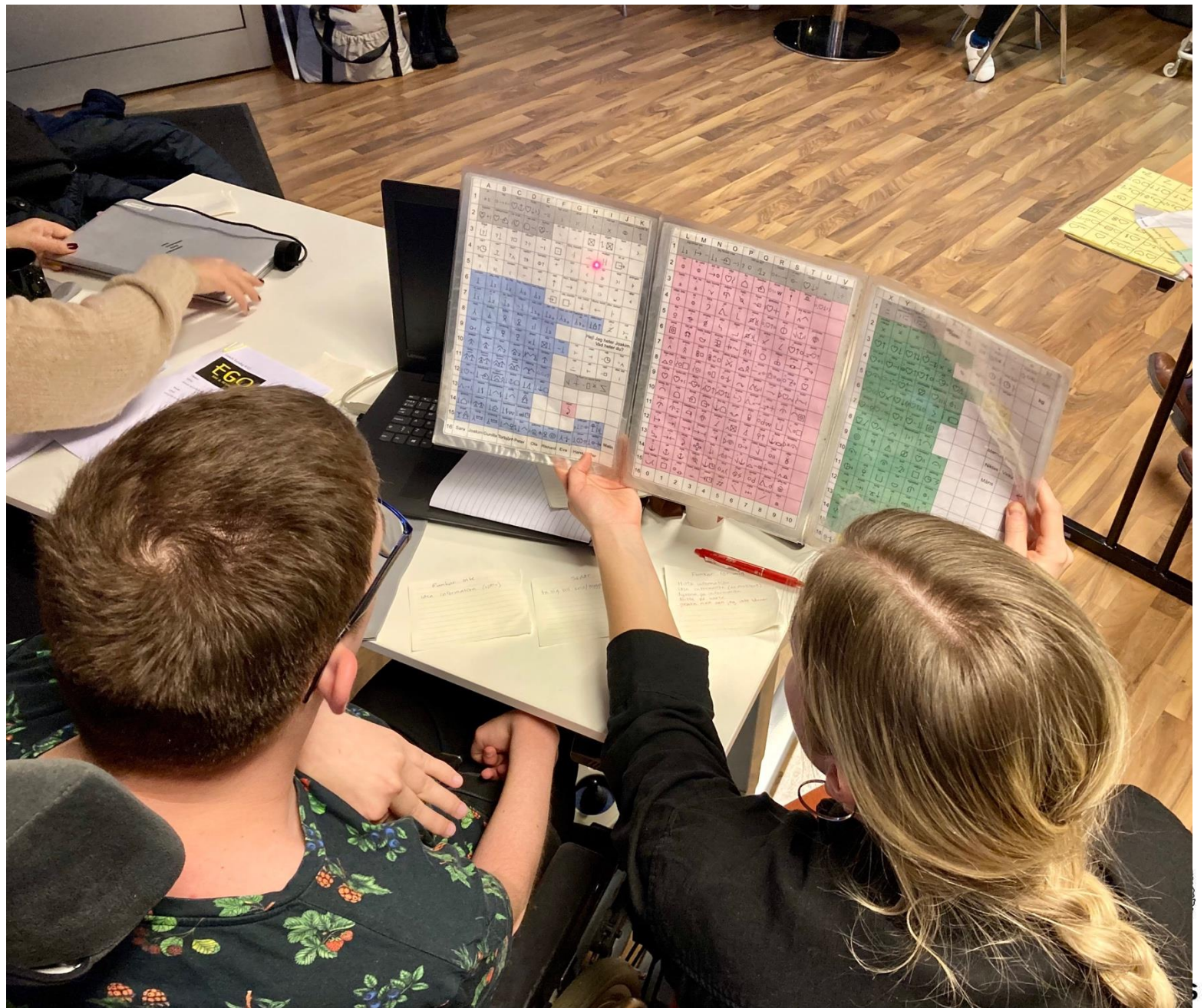
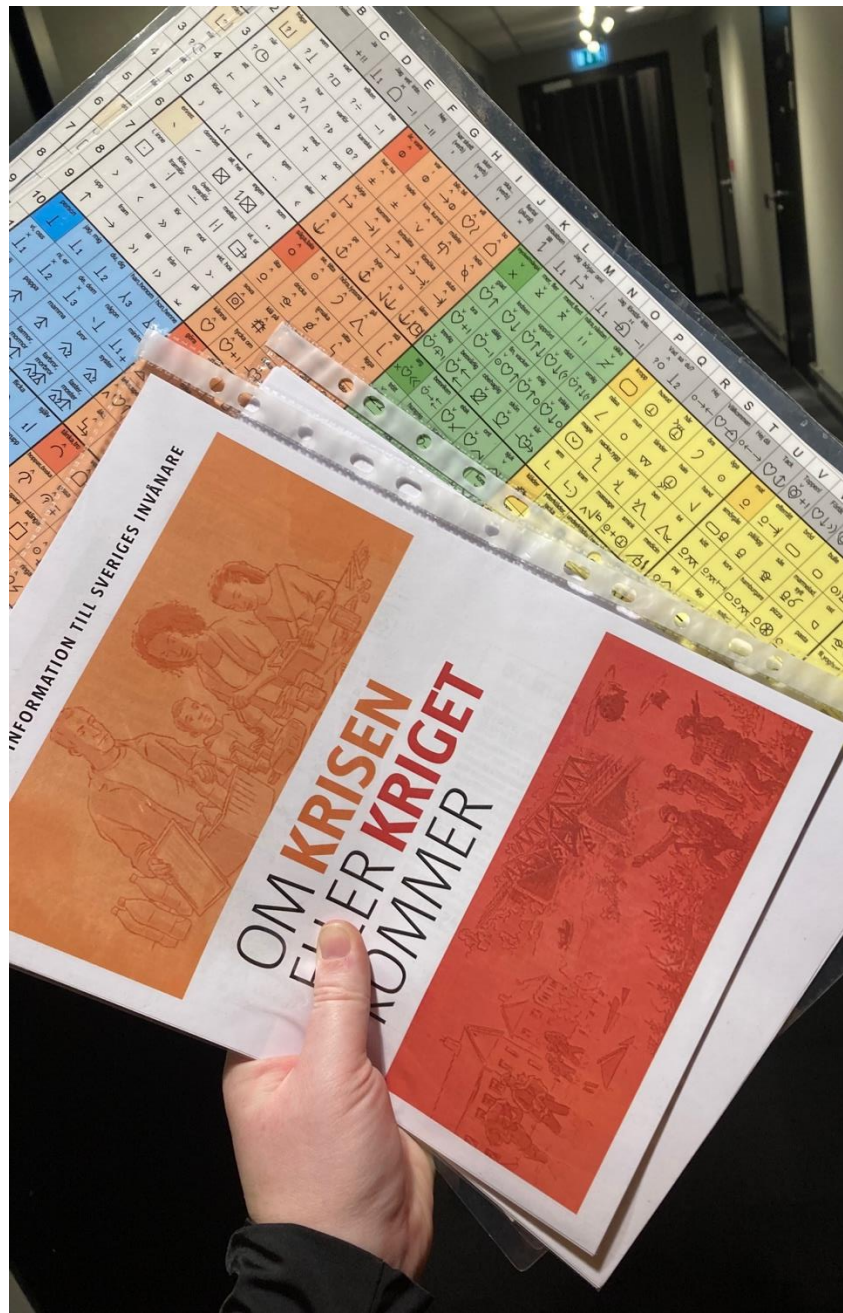


# Pre-workshop with Bliss symbolics experts

- Five expert users
- **Method:**
  - interactive workshop
  - **talking mats** – a visual scale to answer and grade questions
  - Discussions with assistants, followed by group discussions.







# Preliminary findings

**Strengths**

**Fears**

**Ideas**



# Preliminary findings: strengths

Became clear  
during pandemic!

- Strong sense of trust: family, staff, organizations
- Strong social connection within the Bliss community
- Strong sense of mutual responsibility within disability organizations
- Tight bond with family and staff – they are gatekeepers

# Quotes on strengths

My whole life has been a crisis, so I am prepared.

With them [the personal assistants] we can do anything. Without them we can do nothing.

They are our family, we would never abandon them in an emergency.

One becomes set on finding a solution.

# Preliminary findings: fears

- Do not trust society or service providers to know about them
- Even a small crisis could be life threatening (e.g. electricity for breathing)
- Communication requires time, knowledge, and, preferably, a personal relationship.



# Preliminary findings: ideas

- Disability organizations could function as hubs of knowledge and contacts – need to be invited to the big discussions!
- Not all people with severe physical disabilities receive services – they risk falling through the safety net
- Keep basic AAC material at all crisis centres and meeting points

# Conclusion

- Bliss communicators experience difficulties independently accessing crisis information
- Bliss symbolics as a language is infinite, but the Swedish standard vocabulary is limited and largely excludes words relating to crisis
- Bliss users can provide important input to crisis management planning – but accessing their viewpoints require specific AAC skills
- Problematic to be excluded from discussions on a topic because the vocabulary to participate doesn't exist – especially when the topics discussed are a matter of life and death.

Thank you!



[elin.vinblad@furuboda.se](mailto:elin.vinblad@furuboda.se)