

European project drives improved crisis management capabilities

Crisis management practitioners are facing larger and more unpredictable threats from natural and man-made disasters. A good example is this year's forest fires in Europe, whose impacts have been felt all the way from Sweden to urban areas in Greece and have led to a tragic number of casualties.

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DRIVER+, a European project financed under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme, aims to improve capability development and innovation management for European crisis management practitioners. Through a practitioner-led approach, DRIVER+ has assessed the key current gaps in crisis management and has developed an environment for practitioners to evaluate innovative solutions in simulated contexts.

Four trials to assess innovative solutions

The DRIVER+ project comprises the organisation of four trials. The first was held in Warsaw, Poland, from 21-25 May and consisted of assessing the use of three solutions in the context of a highly toxic chemical spillover that threatened to extend across the border. Following an open call, the shortlisted solutions to take part in the trial were selected. The same procedure will be used for all the trials until the end of the project, in 2020.

"DRIVER+ will contribute to the significant improvement in European crisis management capability development."

Trial 2 will be held in the south of France from 22-26 October and will be based on the scenario of a large forest fire in a cross-border Mediterranean environment, threatening nearby towns. The activities of Trial 2 will take place at the premises of Entente pour la Protection de la Forêt Méditerranéenne (VALABRE), a government organisation dedicated to the protection of the forest and the environment against fires.

Trial 2 assumes a particular importance in the recent context of large forest fires in Europe. The objective of this second trial will be to improve cooperation and coordination between different organisations and



Wildfires have caused unprecedented damage to European forests this summer.

agencies from different countries, using solutions designed for large-scale and complex multi-event crises. Multi-agency cooperation will therefore be key in Trial 2, which will also focus on the importance of a Common Operational Picture (COP), highlighting the importance of information sharing between crisis managers and ensuring practitioners' safety during the operations.

Test-bed and Portfolio of Solutions

The DRIVER+ trials are supported by the test-bed, which is developed by the project and provides a technical environment for the solutions to be evaluated, as well as a comprehensive guidance methodology on conducting the trials. The test-bed has a pan-European dimension, which will connect crisis management facilities across the continent, allowing practitioners to collaborate closely when it comes to assessing solutions.

The results from each trial are stored and made available in an online database known as the DRIVER+ Portfolio of Solutions (PoS), which will document all

selected solutions and how they performed during the trials. The PoS will also be open to any external organisation that is willing to share data and experiences of their solutions, thus making it a cross-border and multi-disciplinary sharing platform for crisis management practitioners.

The subsequent DRIVER+ trials, which will be held in The Netherlands and in Austria in 2019, will use the scenarios of a major urban flood and an earthquake respectively and will use the same methodology and procedures from Trial 1 and Trial 2, as part of an ongoing learning process where each trial learns from its predecessor.

Bringing together these innovative solutions, a practitioner-led approach and a pan-European vision that addresses crisis management in a cross-border perspective, DRIVER+ will contribute to the significant improvement in European crisis management capability development. DRIVER+ will enhance a shared understanding in crisis management and facilitate the building of a culture, where practitioners, solution providers and experts can learn from each other in a dynamic and interactive manner towards answering significant challenges facing our societies.

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**Driving Innovation in Crisis Management
for European Resilience**