

Marcel van Berlo speaks to *GEQ* about the DRIVER+ project and outlines the research they are conducting for a safer Europe

# Capability development of European crisis management

**H**ow Europe deals and responds to a crisis is more important now than ever; with the recent terror attacks, current migrant situation and other disasters including the Genoa bridge collapse. Research and development in European crisis management is at the forefront of the European Commission's agenda and have funded a demonstration project in the field of disaster risk reduction called the DRIVER+ project.

Marcel van Berlo (TNO) from the DRIVER+ project spoke to *Government Europa Quarterly* about the importance of the research they are conducting and provides a wider understanding of their objectives.

## The DRIVER+ Project

The DRIVER+ project is funded under the seventh framework programme of the European Commission and stands for: *driving innovation in crisis management for European resilience*. The Commission states that the DRIVER+ project arose from the need for more research and development in crisis management 'as societies are becoming more complex, increasing scope and unpredictability of potential crises and faster dynamics of major incidents which has in turn put increasingly stringent demands on crisis management.' The project will run four trials and a final demonstration over the next two years prior to a final conference in Brussels in February 2020.

The project has three main objectives. The first aim is to create a pan-European test-bed for crisis management capability development. The test-bed has several elements to it, the first being a methodology on how to design trials and how to develop tests in a structured way to enable the assessment of new solutions in a systematic way. Furthermore, DRIVER+ develops the technical infrastructure to create a realistic environment to systematically test the solutions as well as to identify the conditions for successful implementation.

The second objective of the DRIVER+ project is to create a portfolio of crisis management solutions, which not only describes product information but also documents the results that

emerge from the trials and experiences on the solution by the practitioners. The portfolio of solutions is a database-based driven online catalogue which is open to third party solutions and includes shared details of user experience, thereby easing the successful implementation and usage of solutions for other practitioners.

The third and final objective of the project is to develop an enhanced co-operation framework for a shared understanding of crisis management across Europe. This objective is arguably the most important when talking about achieving innovation in crisis management. Having a shared understanding allows for greater co-operation between governments, practitioners, solution providers and research organisations etc. throughout Europe, allowing for increased understanding between EU Member States. The aim of this objective is to build and structure a dedicated community of practice in crisis management (supporting DG HOME's activities in this respect) to facilitate the identification of best practices and the sharing of lessons learnt.

## The first trial from the DRIVER+ project

The first of the four Trials took place in Warsaw, Poland on 21-25th May 2018 and after an open selection process, the trial saw three solutions tested in the context of a chemical accident. The trial looked at how 2,500,000 cubic meters of toxic fluid would affect a nearby population, with the real risk of spilling over into more populated areas and countries. The Trial allowed practitioners to evaluate disaster response in relation to cross-border co-operation between countries; which is an imperative for a unified response from the countries involved. The test could also provide vital information about response to flood disasters and allowed practitioners to simulate adaptation to their response in this situation.

The first trial has provided vital insight into the development of crisis management within Europe around flooding and chemical spillage. It has led



to the further development of a pan-European test-bed and will provide guidance and infrastructure to support future development.

## The next trial: The second trial will be conducted in October 2018

The next Trial of the DRIVER+ project is organised in Valabre and is set to take place on 22-26th October 2018 in France. The focus of the second trial will be to evaluate crisis management in the situation of forest fires in a cross-border environment. This trial seems fitting given the recent crisis across Europe following on from this summer's heatwave.

Four solutions have been selected from the application process and they will be featured during the trial. The main mission objective is to 'suppress the fire' and protect citizens and the environment/infrastructures of the countries involved. The trial will be organised as a table-top activity based on a simulated environment.

For more information on past and future trials as well as the final demonstration, please visit <http://www.driver-project.eu/>. The results from all four trials will be published on the website.

The opinions expressed in this document reflect only the author's view and reflect in no way the European Commission's opinions.

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