CCN
Crisis Communication Network

EUSBSR
EU STRATEGY FOR THE BALTIC SEA REGION
SEED MONEY FACILITY

Project name: **CCN, S34.**

Progress report, November 2014

Main stakeholder; Swedish Coast Guard (SwCG). Partners in the EU Seed Money facility project; Central Command for Maritime Emergencies in Germany and Finnish Border Guard. Connected to the project; All coastguard/equivalent organisations communication departments around the Baltic, and in Norway.

Progress of the project CCN and achievements

The project CCN´s main focus is on network meetings where current challenges within communication are discussed and best practices are presented, and the project is financed by national and international funding.

Most of the countries in the network have been visited by Project Manager appointed, Mrs Lotta Brandström (former head of the SwCG Communications Department). The main focus is to present and strengthen the network and to get a picture of the organisations own work with communication issues, if they use social media and how their relations with national media are handled. In the meetings with the communications departments also several other issues have been brought into the discussion. There is obviously a need for a continued network where training together, learning from each other and getting to know each other's organisation are main wishes. Lead partnership, project partners and budget issues are also discussed during these meetings.

A working meeting between the lead partner in the EU Seed Money Facility project, SwCG and the two partners, Finland and Germany, was held in May 2014. The outlines of a new conference, the second for the network, were drawn.

The second conference for the network was held in Malmö in October 14th -16th 2014. On this meeting the communicators from the different organisations agreed to bring the network further and to aim for a meeting/conference at least once a year. Possible improvements were considered; the network could connect closer to already existing agreements and exercises, for example within HELCOM and Baltic Sarex, meetings could be held in different countries and all agreed that training together is most important and would be of great benefit for the network and its organisations. The training can be done within the already existing international agreements, where annual exercises take place, and must not necessarily involve all countries at the same time. The possibility of visiting and learning from each other´s organisations ("work shadowing") is also a priority area for the network.

Among other presentations an introduction to crisis communication education was given at the conference and also a lap-top-similar training, mainly to encourage the delegates to contact each other and to share information.

It is also clear that since the organisation of the authorities is different in the different countries in the network it will be necessary to engage the SAR-organisations (Search And Rescue) where they are not a part of the coast guard organisations.

Encountered difficulties

There are large benefits from coordinating information, between organisations and towards the public, in aspects as safety at sea - due to a similar picture of an event/incident/accident. The state of play in the Baltic region is

no routines for communication between similar organisations communications departments. The organisational differences in the authorities involved in the network present a challenge, for example the different views of what can/may be used as a digital platform, just as if and how to use social media. It is mainly a question of the level of security and the resources in the organisations themselves.

We also have to reach and agree on a good working level for the network. The members must not be given the impression that the networking “steel” time from their regular work, when it instead should be designed to give them useful and efficient ways to communicate over the borders.

The delegates all agree on the importance of the networks existence; even so the use of a network, by nature informal and flexible, can be difficult to implement in an authority structured to perform its tasks in an impartial, fair and legal manner.

The future funding for the meetings, the lead of the network, how to involve all countries at the same level and also the justifying in the delegates own organisations of the benefits of the network were topics at the conference and considered as challenges by the delegates at the latest conference.
Some of the, though very motivated, organisations are reluctant to a formal EU-project due to the work load they have encountered in former EU-projects.

Future activities

Remaining countries and organisations will be visited by the project coordinator during the winter 2014-2015.

Different existing systems for sharing information between the network members will be examined.

The work to connect closer to already existing agreements and to participate across nation borders in exercises, for example within HELCOM and Baltic Sarex, has begun and will continue.

All members of the network will regularly get an updated contact list and report back necessary updates.

Media training and crisis communication education in the SwCG has taken place during 2014, and will continue during 2015. Both will be evaluated and considered for the network in the future.

The SwCG will develop the practical use of social media during 2015 and report back to the network.

Future funding to enable the continued meetings for the network and possible funding for “work shadowing” for the organisations will be examined.

How to help the project to progress further?

The progress of the project is based upon all countries participation. The project coordinator will most likely need some future help with the contacts in Poland and Denmark; in Poland we have identified the right organisation and in Denmark too, although here the coast guard- and SAR-assignments are about to be reorganised.

The network is a tool for the involved countries, aimed to bring the organisations closer to each other and to put the communication, with each other and stakeholders, higher up on the agenda. Therefore it is also an asset for the safety and security at sea - and as such hopefully worth supporting.

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