

EUROPEAN FP7 PROJECT DEVELOPS FRAMEWORK FOR INTEROPERABILITY OF EUROPEAN CRISIS AND DISASTER RESPONSE

Luxembourg, 08 December 2017: What if a major flooding would happen here in our Great Region, threatening the border areas of Luxembourg, Belgium, France and Germany - would the public safety forces of the three countries be able to work together, communicating without any language barriers and sharing valuable information?

Answering this question is not as easy as one would hope. Efficient communication and access to critical information is a key requirement for the operations of public safety and security services in disasters. Inter-connectedness and cooperation between different rescue teams is essential for saving lives and protecting assets. Nevertheless, sharing of the available information in case of emergency between the teams from different members states is almost impossible.

In 2014, 13 actors from European research institutes, industry, small and medium sized enterprises and practitioners teamed up to develop a concept of a Common Information Space (CIS). The project, funded by the European Commission under the Framework Program 7, was led by the Austrian Institute of Technology. Initiated by Public Safety Communications Europe Forum (PSCE) in which HITEC Luxembourg's Manager of Technology and Research Projects and Board member of PSCE, Harold Linke, played a crucial role, the project was officially kicked-off in June 2014. The EPISECC CIS concept intends to increase a pan-European interoperability of actors in public safety. EPISECC (Establish Pan-European Information Space to Enhance seCurity of Citizens) focuses on two levels of interoperability: the physical (e.g. network) and the syntactical (language) level.

In addition to implementing the software solution, HITEC Luxembourg, as the technical leader of the project, was involved in the main activities of the project, among them:

- Identifying shortcomings of current information and crisis management tools and procedures
- Raising awareness of and advocate for the use of a modern information management and communication technologies by first responders
- Analysing existing concepts of interoperability from different domains as basis for the concept of a common information space

The project has recently passed its final review with success. Major project results were: a prototype of the common information space including specific software adaptors that will allow different organisations, using their different legacy systems, to connect to the CIS, so to receive and to send data while maintaining the same data formats on their systems. The EPISECC adaptors serve as two-way converters between the CIS data format and that of the participating organisation. To improve the understanding between different organisation in a crisis, the EPISECC semantic services allow conversions between emergency related terms and concepts that are not the same among different organisations, even of the same country.

A first productive implementation of the developed solution and concept will be used by the mountain rescue services and fire brigades of Slovenia and northern Italy.

For further information:

Isabell Scherer
HITEC Luxembourg S.A.
+352 49 84 78 – 739
Isabell.Scherer@hitec.lu

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