



Project Periodic Report

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Section 1 - Publishable summary

DITAC



Logo:

Project title: Disaster Training Curriculum

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Contractors involved (DITAC consortium):

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1.1 Summary description of project context and objectives

The DITAC project is developing a holistic training curriculum for professionals in crisis management dealing with international disasters. Through an analysis of existing training and attempts to standardize training in this field, a set of competences has been identified and transposed into 23 key topics for the disaster management curriculum.

a standardised training programme in disaster management can be used to increase Europe's resilience in facing disasters within the European Union as well as in international disasters. Establishing a curriculum on how to respond to an international disaster and making it accessible to pertinent organisations and member states throughout the EU will be a first step towards building a European Emergency Response capacity.

The training is designed to enhance the international and thus intercultural collaboration of specialists in the field of international disaster management. This addresses local, regional and international authorities, NGOs, training institutes, scientific societies and research institutes. The experts will have diverse levels of backgrounds in technical, psychological and medical emergency assistance, logistics, knowledge management, collaborative network development, conflict analysis or security. While this is a diverse target group, a unified interdisciplinary training initiative creates synergies towards an improved disaster response capacity in the European Union.

The DITAC Curriculum will improve the preparedness and proficiency of trained personnel by providing a common language, common objectives and common tools leading to better results in the protection and assistance of people confronted with large-scale disasters.

The objective of the first year of DITAC was to deliver a comprehensive analysis of the state of the art. In this context DITAC has:

- analyzed concepts, methods, and doctrines of crisis response and identified the relevant European competences of disaster management,
- analyzed existing initiatives to generate curricula for disaster management,
- identified the requirements of the local actors in disaster management education,
- identified the needs of relevant actors and the resulting stakeholder requirements for significant improvement of training in international disaster response and management.

The main focus of year two is the development of the curriculum using the comprehensive analysis as a basis for the design of a competence oriented set of topics for training. In this context DITAC is developing

- a didactic concept and course concept which aims to transmit common standards for disaster management education and training, using state of the art methods for teaching and training, and
- an evaluation tool-box for the course.

DITAC provides a curriculum that improves awareness for the entire disaster management process and specific professional competencies based on a set of identified topics that describe a comprehensive view of disaster management, thus combining an intercultural, interdisciplinary and inter-agency approach. Ethical issues will be in close regard throughout all the topics to ensure that ethical awareness is a holistic prerequisite for disaster managers.

DITAC provides scientifically designed standardized training content for disaster management within a clear didactic structure to ensure that training objectives can be achieved in a dependable way, leading to results that can be objectively evaluated. As the design addresses all professions involved in disaster management, this also

strengthens the links between university-based research programs and agencies' practices, leading to more-appropriate aid and civil defence preparations and more knowledge about the true impact that aid has on at-risk populations.

The organization of a pilot study as a proof of concept is the main task of year 3 of DITAC and not applicable for this reporting period. The pilot study will serve to validate the curriculum and provides feedback from the scientific community and possible stakeholders.

1.2 Work performed since the beginning of the project and the main results achieved so far

A review of available literature on major events/incidents has shown a significant willingness to respond to a crisis, especially by western nations. However, a review of after action reports following these same events shows a troubling pattern in which response activities are poorly integrated and response managers inadequately trained for situational requirements. This still holds true. In order to address these problems, an in-depth review of education and training available to responders and crisis managers, was undertaken, as well as an extensive review of the educational competencies and their parent domains (WP1). This review led to the identification of 7 domains of competency that should be mastered by individuals assigned as professionals in disaster management.

This set of domains and individual competencies was the base for the work within Workpackage 2. The set of core competencies was adopted as the commonly accepted and harmonised standard for a description of professional requirements in disaster management. The project now seeks to transfer these competencies into the intercultural curriculum for the DITAC pilot study proof of concept.

While the curriculum handles competence as a progression that leads the trainees through a phase of development, the learning objectives define a specific state that describes, basically, what a person can do and what he/she knows. The demands in a response, but also in preparation to a disaster, are quite precise, so the evaluation procedures have to be as objective as possible and also replicable in different environments. As the training is almost entirely based on competences, the learning environment will be centered on the learner and his or her abilities.

In addition, evaluation of deficiencies identified in past events and review of available education and training has shown the need for a course targeted to the management on the tactical level of disaster response. Within this group commanders are key to the integration of disaster management. Also, tactical ground level managers must be able to work together to maximize capabilities. This necessitates some degree of compatibility in terms of knowledge and capability. To promote interoperability among disaster managers of varying expertise, the same course can be used to instruct all personnel in disaster management.

The didactic concept has been developed to follow the call to standardize the training in the field, defining the basis for the entire learning process including the curriculum, assessment and evaluation.

The concept provides a standardized curriculum that enables four training units:

1. Basic disaster management theory. This is the knowledge-based unit, providing relevant theoretical background as well as in intercultural theories as in theory of disaster management.
2. This is the first competency based unit, addressing the intercultural differences within one profession. This is to establish acceptance and a common understanding for international groups with the same professional background.
3. This is the second competency based training unit and addresses the interdisciplinary aspect. The trainees in this unit will develop their individual competencies in a focussed environment.
4. The fourth unit will combine the three previous steps into a scenario based simulation exercise, addressing all the issues of an intercultural inter-agency cooperation in a near-reality environment.

These four units contain 23 topics DITAC has identified as the basis for the curriculum. Depending on the group of trainees, certain parts of the curriculum may be less important or demand more attention. Depending on the delegates' training needs the scenario can be adapted to meet these needs.

This setup allows a maximum amount of flexibility to meet the differing training needs of diverse target groups while maintaining a standardized curriculum and the same didactic concept.

1.3 The expected final results and their potential impact and use (including the socio-economic impact and the wider societal implications of the project so far)

The DITAC project has a set of possibilities of impact: all education and training courses conducted within the DITAC framework should be archived and accessible in a portal. Further research could be based on this data, which should include a collection of innovative teaching methods, a development of standards and doctrines as well as scenarios. The academic community could freely exploit this information. In addition, the curriculum could be adopted by organizations as it will be freely available material.

If there is a call for a standard, the DITAC consortium will supply the expertise and the experts for managing the education and training courses and consulting organizations and agencies in adopting it. Establishing this education and training courses as a mandatory vocational qualification would certainly provide better efficiency in the European disaster response. The gaps identified can be closed if a harmonized, unified and widely accepted standard is agreed on by all players. More proficiency in disaster management is a benefit in itself.

The key issue to be solved, however, is the standardization of education and training in disaster management. While DITAC is working on harmonizing towards developing a standard in education and training that is acceptable to European agencies and international organizations, this may raise serious political issues. To establish a standard throughout Europe, DITAC provides the ability to overcome political issues by delivering the groundwork for this, having defined a standard set of competencies and developing a standardized form of education and training in disaster management that is flexible, comprehensive and replicable.

A first step towards harmonization and standardization could be an EU-related certification, that motivates different EU GO's and NGO's and similar organizations to design their education and training courses on the base of the DITAC curriculum and didactic concept.

If there is no desire to establish a standard in education and training in disaster management, DITAC will have produced a comprehensive education and training curriculum that can be used in total or in parts. The design of the curriculum and the didactic concept will set an openly accessible base for many stakeholders to adopt according to their needs. Any academic institution or organization can utilize the curriculum at will. If the website and portal are well maintained, it can be used as a platform for academic discussion and for the further improvement of the curriculum, including an archive of scenarios and other relevant professional information. This could be the long-term goal for the project, to establish a database with an active and ongoing discussion for the international improvement of disaster management training and also disaster management procedures.

At the point of this writing, we anticipate that partners from the DITAC consortium, who are involved in training, may offer their services in offering their own education and training courses or facilitating the use of the curriculum by other organizations.