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Our reference: Else Timms, Swedish Coast Guard

Policy paper concerning strategic development of divers in the Baltic Sea Region

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this policy paper is to further improve the safety at sea within the Baltic Sea area.

The improvement will be achieved by cooperation within selected areas in order to share and transfer knowledge of each other's competences and resources. The knowledge of routines and resources will increase the efficiency in deployment to an accident site, the cooperation on the site, and the endurance over time, thus improving the emergency preparedness in the Baltic Sea area.

Organizations that form the partnership referred to in this document, and that will perform the tasks mentioned are connected to the ResQU2 project. The partnership is listed at the end of this document.

Introduction

The Baltic Sea consists of a relatively a small area, surrounded by nine countries. If a crisis at sea occurs, more than 90% of the locations can be reached by emergency services within 6-8 hours. It is a cold sea whatever the season which makes time an essential factor when working within the field of emergency preparedness and rescue diving. As a small sea, any accident in the Baltic Sea becomes a problem for all surrounding countries.

Current situation

At present, due to the geographical scope, cooperation and coordination of human and technical resources is possible, indeed essential for efficiency when an accident occurs. Emergency preparedness is today good in the Baltic Sea area, but can be improved further.

Knowledge of and familiarity with each other's equipment and routines will efficiently save time when arriving at an accident site, and also ensure durability over time. This effort will improve maritime safety and security for both the citizens of the Baltic Sea area, and also organizations involved in emergency preparedness

Proposals

To achieve these improvements we suggest:

- a) An inventory of human and technical resources within water diving, together with listed national points of contact.

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A general knowledge of capacities and equipment available when planning the initial response to an accident saves time. The Baltic is a cold area, and consequently time is often crucial when saving lives. A quick mobilization of the correct equipment and competences to the accident site can be facilitated by making knowledge available prior the accident. The capacity to plan on a lasting basis over time also depends on this information, which is essential for safety and security for the organizations involved in the rescue operation.

The inventory will also provide a good basis for a gap-analysis which will reveal which technical and human resources are missing or overlapping.

Apart from the inventory the information will include basic details agreed on, concerning work on an international accident site.

b) Regular international exercises.

Emergency preparedness is improved by knowledge of human and technical resources. It is made increasingly efficient if combined with regular exercises and familiarity with practical working routines, standards and strategies within a small group of countries surrounding a common sea, all of which facilitate a safe and efficient rescue operation. The diving exercises should be based on those gaps and challenges observed during operations, together with analysis of the listed human and technical resources. The exercises should be national, bilateral and internationally recurring. When national or bilateral, observers should be encouraged to participate from countries not at that time directly involved in the exercise. Evaluation of all exercises should be shared so lessons learned are spread around the Baltic Sea states, and future exercises can be planned taking account of gaps and challenges observed. Evaluation can also demonstrate that previously observed gaps in the emergency preparedness, once eliminated, will lead to gains in efficiency, and new areas and challenges can replace them.

c) Standard Operational Procedures and Guidelines

There are existing international SOP:s and guidelines on how to work together when arriving at an accident site involving several countries' emergency services. Regular exercises should include the existing SOPs/guidelines so they are familiar to the authorities and organizations working within emergency preparedness around the Baltic Sea. This will improve the efficiency, safety and security of all involved.

d) A suggestion of a structure for national and international cooperation

- Each organization in the partnership is to appoint a point of contact. This person is to be responsible for contacting authorities and organizations with divers in his/her country and forming a group.
- The group in will be responsible for the inventory of human and technical resources within diving in each country. The information will be compiled, and available to the point of contact. The point of contact can share the information with the group responsible for the inventory, but access to the information is to be limited.
- A gap analysis based on the inventories is essential for planning and efficiency. The point of contact is responsible for this work in an international group consisting of the point of contact from each country.

- The point of contact will also take part in exercise planning based on gaps observed in the inventory of human and technical resources, and lessons learned from incidents, accidents and previous exercises.
- The point of contact will also be responsible for identifying observed benefits or limitations of national or international regulations and bringing these to the international group. The aim of this is to address the necessity of change when a limitation makes an impact on efficiency. It will also facilitate making common commitments and agreements that will improve efficiencies.
- The point of contact will be responsible for spreading the information from the international group to its relevant organizations and authorities in his/her country.

e) Procedure:

A general meeting for all representatives selected from authorities and organizations from and connected to the partnership around the Baltic Sea will be arranged at a minimum once a year, with the purpose of dissemination of information. International authorities in the area of safety at sea will also be included in the invitation.

In addition to this there will be at a minimum one meeting a year for the point of contact. During this meeting work will focus on analysis of information collected on competences and resources, discussion on gaps deduced from the information, planning of exercises and training in order to overcome the gaps, and areas in need of further research and development. The information concluded from this meeting will be the base of the general meeting to which all national and international authorities and organizations will be invited.

Conclusion

The aim of this policy paper is to improve safety and security in the Baltic Sea area by improving efficiency in emergency preparedness. By signing this paper we agree to allocate the necessary resources during 2020-2021: the commitment of one person from each authority/organization in the partnership to participate in the work. The work will consist of the inventory of competences and resources, participation in three meetings during 2020 and 2021, the preparatory work for these meetings, and the dissemination of discussions and results of the meeting.

The work will start in the Spring 2020 and be evaluated during Autumn 2021. After the evaluation it will be decided how the work is to proceed. The responsible organizations for arranging the first meeting will be the Swedish Coast Guard, within the ResQU2 project.

All the activities in this policy paper are to be carried out in accordance with national and EU legislation, and within each organizations assignment of work.

Partnership;

Swedish Coast Guard

Estonian Police and Border Guard

Finnish Border Guard

Hamburg Fire and Rescue Service

Fire and Rescue Department of Lithuania

Southwest Finland Emergency Services

Polish Naval Academy

Latvian Maritime Academy