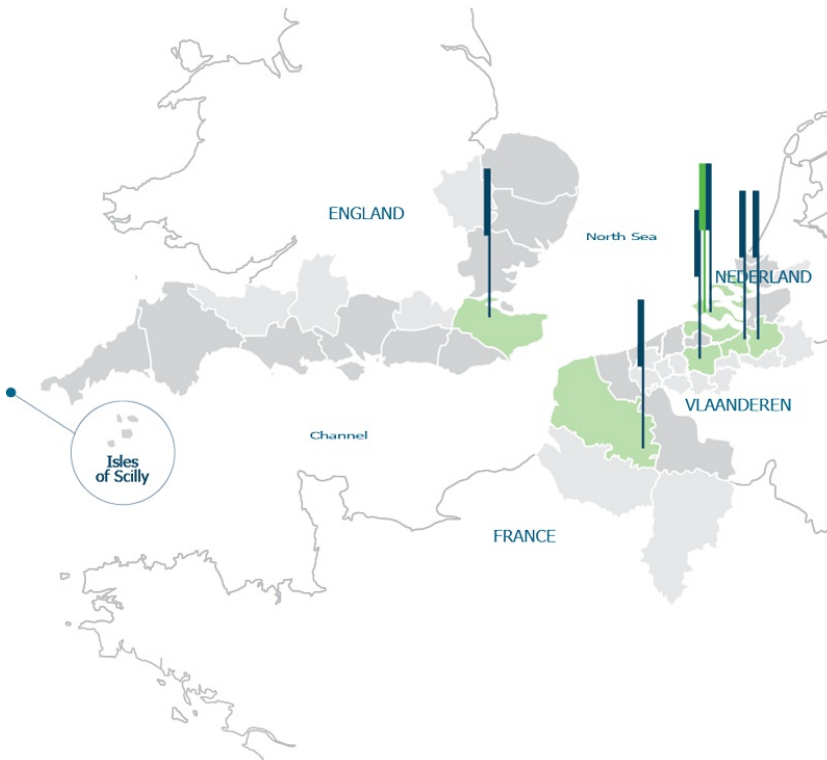


MIRG EU

Maritime Incident Response Group EU



■ Project summary



Shipping is a safe form of transport. However, when accidents do occur, the consequences can be extremely serious in terms of fatalities, environmental pollution or economic consequences for the fishing and leisure industries. To provide this safety in the 2 Seas area, the fire brigades from the four Member-States have decided to cooperate and establish a cross-border Maritime Incident Response Group (MIRG EU). The objective of the project is to create and train 3 maritime incident response groups (MIRGs) in Belgium, France and the Netherlands, using the existing knowledge and skills of the MIRG team in England. The aim is to form a specialised group of firefighters

using a common set of procedures for fire-fighting and incident response, on passenger ships and cargo vessels. They will implement the results of a shared training scheme based on a risk analysis of the 2 Seas area that will define common methodologies and protocol. Through the project, almost 120 French, Belgian and Dutch firemen will be trained.

■ Activities

What was the project trying to achieve?

The aim of MIRG EU was to reduce casualties and economic/environmental damage caused by incidents on passenger ships and cargo vessels. The project objective was to increase the readiness of the fire brigades by rolling out the following activities: developing of procedures, trainings and exercises. MIRG EU facilitated cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experience between firefighters. By developing a uniform international approach, the teams will be able to assist each other in the event of long-term large-scale maritime incidents. The MIRG EU project will directly contribute to the environmental, economic and social development of the 2 Seas area. Incidents on vessels can result in severe casualties and damage to

property, businesses, the natural environment and infrastructure. By developing procedures and training maritime incident response teams, the project has minimized and mitigated this impact. The project also supports the development of increased and meaningful cooperation within the 2 Seas area. It brought together a cross-border team of experts to jointly develop organizational and technical procedures. The project has therefore removed traditional working boundaries and promoted joint approaches. MIRG EU facilitates cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experience between firefighters in order to minimize the impact of maritime incidents.

What were the activities implemented?

Activity 1 consisted of four main activities: developing a risk analysis of the area and activities of the MIRG team, developing a training manual, deployment of equipment and the composition of 3 mirg teams. All activities were carried out according to plan although it took more time than initially planned with most of the activities reaching their end in the second or even third activity period. Special mention here is to the work related to the common standard operational procedures (SOP). This proved to be the key product around which all other activities were centered and it was not perceived as being so important at the start of the project. Activity 2 consisted of three main activities: education, training and exercises (ETE) MIRG EU, implementation of alert and assistance protocols and the development of a, two yearly, education, training and exercise (ETE) program. All activities were carried out with the exception of the implementation of the alert and assistance protocols. These have been developed and discussed with the maritime authorities in all three countries (UK already had them in place) and a blue print is available. Due to different legal, financial and capacity problems the protocols have not been tested and therefore implemented at this time. All countries foresee to get this underway in 2015 and achieve the end goal by then. Activity 3 consisted of two main activities: the large scale exercise (LSE) and the evaluation of the LSE. In the LSE, carried out in June 2014, the concept of MIRG EU was tested and proved to work fine. The evaluation delivered some points of attention and is the start of a continuous learning program between the partners. The project management and coordination activities (4 and 5) organised a final conference in the last part of the project to showcase the results of MIRG EU to stakeholders and beneficiaries.

■ Results

What were the key results of the project?

The most important result of the project is 4 teams ready to intervene at minor and major incidents in the 2 seas area. This maritime fire and rescue service was not available in France, Belgium and the Netherlands and was almost cancelled in the UK. Besides these well equipped and trained teams the project delivered some important tangible results. Most importantly the project delivered a standard operational procedure (SOP) which is used in 4 countries and will be jointly kept up to date after the end of the project. These procedures allow for working together but also form a framework to introduce and adapt new ways of working or best practices. With this all 4 countries can learn from each other. Attached to the SOP a 2 year ETE program was delivered outlining the educational, training and exercise needs for the MIRG EU teams. Furthermore a risk analysis was delivered on the risks of the 2 seas area and the

likelihood something might happen in this very busy shipping lane. This report underlines the need to have some kind of response ready in the case of an incident. Also a list of specialised and interoperable equipment, including a risk analysis, was delivered allowing the MIRG teams to acquire the right gear for their work. Finally a video of the large scale exercise was made, outlining the concept of MIRG, and an evaluation of the MIRG exercise was made.

Did all partners and territories benefit from the results?

The following target groups are the beneficiaries: • Emergency services across the 2 Seas area and further afield in the EU • Port companies • Salvage companies • Environmental agencies • Maritime agencies • Economic players • Coastal agencies • Logistics and transport players (e.g. shipping companies) • National, regional and local authorities As final beneficiaries the following groups can be determined: passengers on (ferry)vessels, civilians in the coastal zone and fishing industry. These last two groups benefit from a better response to potential harmful environmental incidents.

What were the effects / outcomes for the territories involved?

The outcome of the MIRG EU project is that people can move more freely and securely in the Channel zone and the the Nord Sea area as they now have a better and dedicated response in the case of an emergency. With passenger numbers every year on the increase that is a comforting thought. Also the people living close to shore or a harbour have a better chance of reduced exposure to dangerous chemicals as a better and swifter response is available. Finally the project helps to prevent possible harmful spills to the fishing industries operating in the area.

■ **Distinctiveness**

What was the real added-value of doing this cross-border project?

Maritime incidents often have an international character. MIRG EU partners have all identified maritime incidents as a significant threat to the population, environment and economy of their regions, as well as to the wider 2 Seas area. Effective incident control requires sufficient and specialised firefighters. Only by means of cross-border cooperation and the sharing of knowledge and experiences it is possible to guarantee the necessary quantity and quality for incident control over a longer period.

Have any synergies been developed with other projects or networks?

Yes, at the moment we are trying to have the MIRG-EU teams accepted within the European Union Civil Protection Mechanism. Also a collaboration of MIRG EU partners has been successful in securing a grant from this Mechanism/ DG ECHO for the organisation of a large scale maritime exercise called MIRG-EX in 2016.

What are the key messages , key lessons learned you would like to share?

The key message would be to invest in the relations before starting the project, to focus on a good understanding of the details of the project and to start communicating with stakeholders as soon as possible.

■ Project Information

Title	Maritime Incident Response Group EU
Total project budget	€ 3 094 818
ERDF	€ 1 547 409
Priority & objective	Priority 2 b. Develop activities to prevent and cope with natural, technological and human risks and to guarantee the quality of the environment
Timeframe	2012-01-01 - 2014-09-30
Lead partner	Veiligheidsregio Zeeland
Project Coordinator	Jeroen Zonnevijlle(j.zonnevijlle@vrzeeland.nl)

