

MARPART-PROJECT CONSORTIUM MOBILIZES COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP ON MARITIME PREPAREDNESS IN THE HIGH NORTH

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Changes in the maritime activity pattern of the Arctic have caused concern as to the emergency preparedness capacities in the region. This concern has triggered efforts by the Arctic universities to meet and discuss Arctic emergency management and cooperation during a conference. The 5th MARPART-conference took place on October 17th-18th, 2016 at the coastal liner MV Polarlys. The MARPART consortium includes 15 universities with focus on maritime emergency preparedness and cross-border cooperation in the High North. The consortium is coordinated by the Nord University in Bodø, Norway. MARPART is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Nordland County Administration and the participating institutions.

The project emphasizes the potential risks of maritime traffic in Arctic environments. Complexity as well as uncertainty due to climate, weather and remoteness is a challenge for commercial players. Oil drilling, increased Arctic cruise ship mass-tourism, freight shipping along the Northern sea-routes and the increased security-debate of the last years pose a multitude of challenges and potential hazards.

The emergency preparedness system includes search and rescue (SAR) mission coordination centers, police forces, military special forces, coast guard, fire brigades, private preparedness organizations, voluntary organizations, the ship owners and their stakeholders. The range of actors entails an increased coordination effort. In addition, several areas of the High North demand cross-border coordination to accumulate enough capacities in major incidents.

Researchers within the MARPART-consortium elaborate on the operational management of joint and combined operations. Including several parts of the preparedness system and resources from several countries is key.

The Conference

As part of the necessary efforts, MARPART organizes semi-annual conferences in order to provide a meeting place including industry representatives, government, preparedness professionals and academia. The conferences help on the one hand to present the status quo of project advancement to a relevant field of stakeholders. On the other hand, current trends and future requirements to the maritime preparedness sector are being discussed.

Recently, the 5th MARPART-conference (Bodø-Tromsø (Norway) – October 17th-18th, 2016) was held at the Hurtigruten Coastal Cruiser "MV Polarlys". Leader of the Marpart project and initiator of the conference, Prof. Odd Jarl Borch stated that the conference provided "a rare opportunity for researchers to sit down with government agencies and emergency agency professionals to identify how we can help each other".

The conference program included discussions on the need for continuous innovations within the prepar-

edness system in the High North. One of the sessions highlighted the Arctic policies of Norway, Denmark, Greenland and the EU, as well as their respective priorities in the field of safety and security in Arctic waters. Another session focused on assessment of risk patterns in different maritime regions. Conference participants also discussed SAR coordination capabilities in Russia and the United States, as well as the Barents Sea Exploration Collaboration (BASEC) a co-operation between the oil companies with licenses in the Norwegian part of the Barents Sea. The importance of emergency maritime management, with special focus on large scale-emergencies were emphasized. We currently still have limited knowledge on challenges related to mass rescue operations. An efficient Search and Rescue value chain is of special importance when it comes to cruise ship activity with larger vessels. This activity is expected to increase after the successful tour by the cruise ship MV Crystal Serenity through the North West passage this summer.

Finally, educational issues including training for vessel crews following the implementation of the Polar Code as well as competence development for key personnel within the emergency preparedness system were discussed.

The Marpart consortium is now in the process of looking into the **institutional framework and the governance structures of the emergency preparedness system of the Arctic countries**. The main objectives are to enlighten the future potential for international agreements, joint operations as well as the development of joint operational resource capacities and competences. Aspects of cooperative climate, trust and relations are studied and future plans related to the preparedness system are being analyzed.

The Marpart consortium also looks into the organizations and operational management structures with special focus on the tactical and operational levels within the preparedness system and different concepts for cooperation across institutional borders. This is achieved by screening preparedness institutions and their operational management patterns as well as assessing best practice within the coordination of joint multi-national operations. The Marpart project will end with a look into the educational programs in the academic and training institutions in the High North and develop concepts for testing and documentation of different training concepts.

Further information on MARPART is available at www.marpart.no.

