

Speech mr. Verdult, chair steering committee Project Chain of Safety

SPOKEN TEXT IS LEADING

Ladies and gentlemen,

With great pleasure I will now guide you through the aim, the actions, the output and the recommendations of our project Chain of Safety.

This project from the start was meant to be an intermediate project, and started on the request of the Interreg-Secretariat. We had to bring together knowledge, and were expected to be a stepping stone for next projects. Our focus was the question “What to do when your feet get wet ?”

The **aim** of the project was to facilitate cooperation, exchange of experience and mutual assistance between North Sea Regions in the event of coastal flooding. The overall objective of the project was to initiate a contingency plan for flooding covering the whole North Sea Area in order to implement this contingency plan during the programme period 2007-2013.

The lead partner of the project was the Province of Zeeland (the Netherlands). To give credit to all the work they have done I want to mention our other **partners**: the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management (the Netherlands), the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (the Netherlands), the Essex County Council (UK), the Danish Coastal Authority (Denmark), the Ministry of the Interior of the Land Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) and the Flemish Ministry of Transport and Public Works (Belgium).

Sub-partners of Chain of Safety were the Province of East-Flanders (Belgium), the Province of West-Flanders (Belgium) and the Municipality of Schouwen-Duiveland (the Netherlands). An associated partner of Chain of Safety was the Province of Antwerp (Belgium).

The project restricted to coastal flooding, because we knew and about the initiative of the City of Cologne to specialize in flooding from rivers.

You can find the results of Chain of Safety in the conference-box. I am proud to present you the headlines of our basic document today.

We had to work out four **actions**:

- Action 1: A comprehensive analysis of the existing local, regional and national flood plans in the North Sea Regions
- Action 2: Defining a contingency plan for flooding for the North Sea Region based on a common approach towards the Chain of Safety in the North Sea Area
- Action 3: Inventory into the research to implement the chain of safety and of the available equipment for implementing the chain of safety for the North Sea Region into practise
- Action 4: Dutch-Belgian coastal regions example to be utilised for further implementation

To organize this we installed the following working committees, in which all partners were represented:

1. Working committee “Plans”; later combined “Plans and equipment”;
2. Working Committee “Pilot” for the area West-Flanders and Zeeland;
3. Working Committee “Knowledge” to centralize the output of the other working committees, and to produce a data-base with plans, documents, and relevant other information.

By bringing together all knowledge and experience on coastal flooding throughout the North Sea Region, we aimed at **optimisation of cooperation**. Our starting options were to provide input for an international plan or agreement, a crisis-management organization, and a knowledge centre.

The **project ran from April 2006 till July 2008**. After a starting meeting the organizational structure was agreed with a steering committee and working committees. Workshops were organised with experts in the field of making contingency plans, organizing assistance, and knowledge-exchange.

(Project-communication)

For the communication about the project a **website** was launched, which will stay in the air after the project period: www.chainofsafety.com.

Also four **newsletters** were published and distributed widely in the North Sea Region.

During the projectperiod contacts grew with the Interreg IIIb-projects ComCoast and Safecoast. A **mutual film** was made together. You saw the result this morning.

(The Chain of Safety)

We agreed on the principle that safety and security policy is based on what is referred to as **the 'chain of safety'**.

In practice the chain of safety can be approached from an operational point of view as well as from an administrative point of view. A distinction is usually made between five links: pro-action, prevention, preparation, response and recovery.

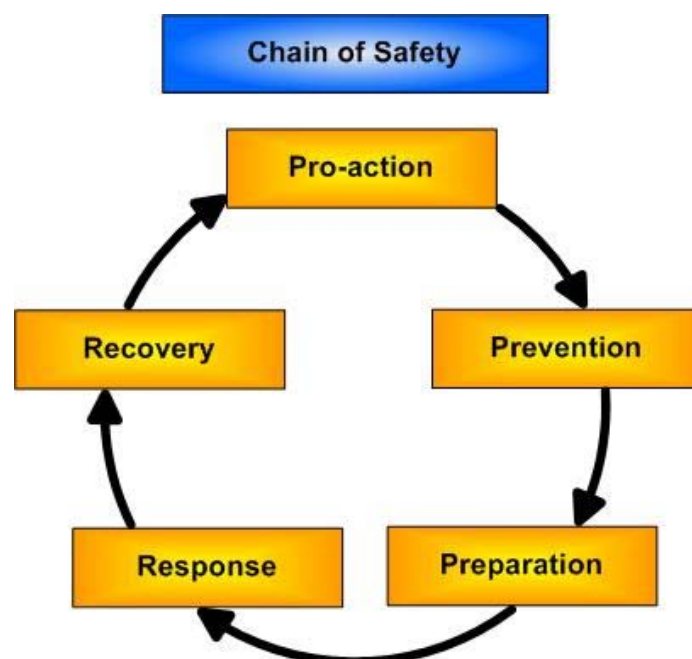


Figure 1. The Chain of Safety

The chain of safety has five links. These links differ from each other in their time scope (from long term prevention to medium-term recovery) and aim.

The five different links can be distinguished:

- **Pro-action:** the elimination of structural causes of danger, thereby preventing the development of dangerous situations.
- **Prevention:** the minimization of risks and the restriction of the consequences of any accidents that occur.
- **Preparation:** the preparations for the control of accidents, disasters and crises.
- **Response:** the operational control of dangerous situations that have occurred, including the provision of the necessary assistance.
- **Recovery:** the concluding link in the safety chain. Recovery focuses on the return to the normal situation, together with evaluations that result in procedural improvements.

We agreed to focus on the last three links of this chain. We did not want to do the work of the engineers. That was the field of the project Safecoast.

But it was also interesting to see that in Safecoast a different explanation is given to the word "prevention". Anyway, we used this interpretation.

Plans

In order to get a **short overview of the existing contingency planning** within the participating partners of this project, a quick scan has been made.

This inventory scheme outlines the basic capability related to the links of the Safety Chain, regarding the Member States of the North Sea Region/Partners of the Project for different – governmental - levels.

The goal was to get a rough insight in the necessary preparation to respond together when multiple members are affected by coastal floods.

For each item the **activity or capacity is based on a common/agreed/written plan, scheme, strategy, blueprint, design or scenario.**

The organisations HKV, COT and Impact in The Netherlands together produced a concept **checklist** as a fine example for preparations in **the recovery-phase.**

This checklist is intended to create insight into the recovery-phase by illustrating issues and actions that need to be taken by crisis teams, sub-divided in four groups:

- I Reconstruction
- II Temporary services
- III Shelter of victims
- IV Remediation management

Based on insights and on historical data of storms occurred in the past, a qualitative extrapolation into the North Sea has been made (See figure 2). It has been assumed that the location of simultaneous flooded areas along the North Sea depends on the wind pattern direction of the storm. But of course during a storm winds can change rapidly. More than one

of the described areas can be effected then. But not all of them make cross-border assistance possible.

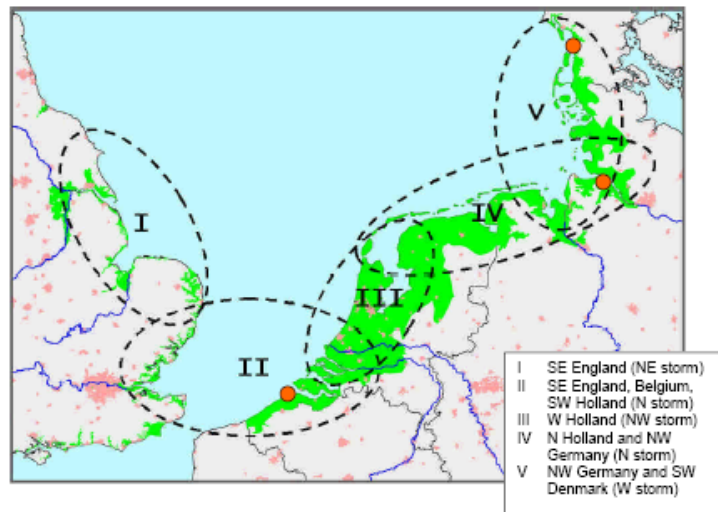


Figure 2. **Coastal areas at risk** to flooding from sea; the red dots represent the case studies of the project

Three areas were chosen for a **case study**. The Belgium-Dutch coastal border zone was chosen as the site for the case study (II or III). Breaches were supposed near Knokke (B) and Breskens (NL).

Equipment

A form has been drafted and sent around to the project partners to serve as a first **inventory on physical equipment and human resources**. But looking at the feedback and the results the conclusion came up that it could not be feasible as a project's outcome to produce a detailed list or a central database of available equipment. This would mean double work, because resource databases are already kept and updated by the regional / national information and coordination centres. During the workshop discussions, invited experts pointed out that generally there is enough equipment available. The problem would mainly be to get it in time to the place where it is needed.

Further, the focus was directed to the question which structures of mutual assistance exist already. In every country there are information and coordination centres on almost every level of administration. They gather information, process requests for assistance and coordinate rescue and emergency relief measures. On the EU level, the Monitoring and Information Centre (**MIC**) of the EU plays this role. Mutual assistance between the member states is based upon the Community mechanism for civil protection.

Experts at the workshop on equipment in Ribe pointed out that when asking for assistance, rather capabilities than resources should be defined. Furthermore, the EU mechanism on civil protection and the existing resource databases at the MIC were assigned to be sufficient.

The partners agreed that the European mechanism should be the scale to arrange support from other countries in case of a trans-national flood disaster at the North Sea.

The project-partners are willing to assist the MIC in improving the EU Mechanism. The MIC can ask them to be part of a working-group that produces a MIC-form on the specific scenario of a coastal flooding in the North Sea Region.

The Pilot area

The **pilot coastal contingency plan** will serve as a step and learning exercise towards future North Sea contingency planning in cross-bordering areas.

Within the Dutch-Belgian coastal region the results of the inventories on available plans and equipment were used to compare the existing situations. This has resulted in an example on how to deal with a transnational contingency plan for coastal flooding.

The product is a cross-border contingency-plan for the scenario coastal flooding. This includes the risks and scenario's, the crisis-management and crisis-organisation in schemes of both countries and a cross-border scheme, the description of the main processes, alarm-schemes, a communication paragraph and information about facilities and logistics. This plan is also in the conference-box available for you all.

In an exercise that was held this week, and that was presented by the Governor of West-Flanders this morning, the plan was tested.

Exchange of knowledge

One of the aims of the Interreg-NSR Project Chain of Safety was to facilitate the **cooperation and the exchange of knowledge** in the event of coastal flooding. Among other things, this project surveyed and compiled the existing knowledge regarding crisis-management in a coastal flooding. Contingency-plans, Response-measures and recovery-measures were the main topics. On our website we build a data-base for this purpose.

The need to combine and centralise this knowledge in a **knowledge centre** was one of the main conclusions. The partners agreed to ask the Province of Zeeland to organise this. The Centre should host a library combined with a central data-base. There should be opportunities for research, studies, education and information. Not only for experts, but also for students and for the general public. The perspective is on a European scale.

Ladies and gentlemen, I will come to the **conclusions** of the project.

The project was a good initiative to start to speak the same 'language' and will definitely accelerate the action-time in case of an event ! We adopted the glossary from Floodsite.

With the basic-document and the pilot-plan the representatives of the national governments can initiate a transnational meeting with their colleagues in the North Sea Region countries. Here they can promote the framework for a transnational contingency-plan on coastal flooding, and take the lead in producing the draft for this.

The draft can be worked out in the final text for a transnational plan, or in a transnational treaty. **A Memorandum of Understanding could be the way to work out this transnational agreement.**

The conclusion can be drawn that **the project succeeded in reaching its aims.** However, one must also consider that the project-outcomes from the start were due to be the **primary basic document**, the framework, for a transnational contingency-plan on coastal flooding for

the North Sea Region countries. It can therefore be concluded that the project should get a **follow-up**.

I thank you for your attention!