

Press Release

Eisenerz, 11 September 2019

State-of-the-art digital technology for European crisis management

European crisis and disaster management experts meet in Austria for extensive trials

Vienna/Eisenerz – TRIAL Austria, the last of the four crisis management trials conducted as part of the EU-funded project DRIVER+, will take place in the region of Eisenerz, Styria, from 12 to 14 September. In this final trial, Austrian communications solutions for crisis and disaster management will be deployed in a fictitious earthquake disaster scenario. Following the successful testing of project developments in Poland, France and the Netherlands, this major exercise is being organised and conducted by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology in close coordination with the Austrian Red Cross. Several state-of-the-art digital solutions will be deployed for the first time.

The Trial will investigate the best possible support for stakeholders in crisis and disaster management (CDM). The test scenario postulates a heavy earthquake in central Austria registering 6.8 on the Richter scale, with subsequent heavy rains and increasing numbers of missing persons and casualties, collapsed buildings, blocked roads and endangered industries. Following a call for applications, five solutions were selected for the exercise. Over 3 days their feasibility will be tested in the scenario in Eisenerz. The exercise involves all national emergency response organisations (Red Cross, Fire Brigade, Police and Army) as well as international rescue teams.

AIT is taking part as the Austrian specialist for cutting-edge command & control communication solutions, and is presenting its digital application CROWDTASKER. The acceptability and efficiency of this software has already been successfully demonstrated in Murau during a disaster management exercise held together with the province of Styria, civilian and military institutions and volunteer organisations at the end of 2018. CROWDTASKER will now be evaluated in Eisenerz within the framework of the international TRIAL Austria. The software helps integrate support staff and local volunteers in the CDM while supporting real-time communication between this group and the emergency personnel who issue the various search and rescue tasks. It also provides a real-time operational picture of the stricken area in order to facilitate efficient operational planning and decision making.

Other crisis management solutions applied in the TRIAL Austria include the generation of operational pictures both from the air and on the ground (Airborne & Terrestrial Situational Awareness) provided by the German Aerospace Center (DLR); a high-precision, mission-critical geospatial photo and video communication solution (ASIGN PRO) from ANSUR for improving the response times of the rescue teams; a visualisation tool (VIEWTERRA) from the company VWORLD which combines the output of all the participating solutions to provide a common operational picture, both for the crisis centre and also for the rescue services on the ground. These

offerings are rounded off by psychological first aid (PFA) provided by the Danish Red Cross to those affected within the crisis area.

Austrian portfolio of solutions for European crisis and disaster management

From the beginning, the Crisis and Disaster Management team at the AIT Center for Digital Safety & Security has taken a holistic approach in order to overcome interoperability problems stemming from the variety of standalone IT applications used by different emergency organisations. Working in close cooperation with the Austrian public authorities, the regional warning centres and the Austrian Red Cross, in recent years the Center for Digital Safety & Security has developed a comprehensive portfolio of modern crisis and disaster management solutions.

The technological cornerstones of the digital CDM communications platform developed by AIT include a common information sharing environment for the command & control area (C2) of emergency personnel in charge of disaster management, with a special focus on seamless information exchange between military and civilian IT systems; a mobile application (CROWDTASKER) which allows interaction with volunteers, directing their involvement in an efficient national crisis and disaster management system; and UAV and land-based robotic survey analysis systems which provide a real-time operational picture of the situation in the danger zone, e.g. contaminated areas, serving to greatly improve the safety of rescue personnel. The platform also includes advanced sensor networks and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies which are already being used around the globe to monitor environmental parameters, for example on construction sites (dust and noise pollution), for managing industrial contamination (radioactive and chemical pollutants), for safety-related sectors (preventative measures to combat natural disasters such as flooding, forest fires and other hazards), as well as for traffic control (pollution-based traffic management) and urban planning.

Press conference and guided tour for the media in Eisenerz on Friday, 13 September, from 10:30

The TRIAL Austria will take place simultaneously and in close coordination with IRONORE2019, an EU co-financed national exercise of the Red Cross which is also being carried out in Eisenerz. National emergency organisations will be present with their volunteers and experts while making use of equipment, vehicles and tools in simulated disaster scenarios. Around 1000 people will be involved in the exercise as a whole; the Red Cross will provide 350 participants for its national exercise; over 80 participants from DRIVER+, international units and cooperating organisations and authorities will be involved in the TRIAL Austria.

On Friday, 13 September 2019 media representatives will have the opportunity to attend a press conference at 10:30, followed by a media tour of the various trial areas and exercises being conducted as part of IRONORE2019 and TRIAL Austria. The meeting point is the JUFA media centre (address: Ramsau 1, 8790 Eisenerz/Styria). A presentation of the various CDM solutions is also planned in the DRIVER+ control centre (address: Enzianstrasse 17, 8790 Eisenerz, Styria) on this day, from 14:00 to 16:00. Those wishing to take part are requested to register for accreditation with michael.muerling@ait.ac.at.

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