

Exercise SCOPE 2017

Experience gained from organising a large-scale oil spill and HNS exercise

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Introduction

In 2015 the Norwegian Coastal Administration decided to apply EU for funding of a large scale marine pollution exercise. A large scale exercise was considered to be important to prepare for a worst case incident. Partners in the project were Sweden, Denmark, and Iceland in addition to representatives from local authorities.

EU accepted the application and the project was officially launched January 1, 2017. A project manager was employed in a full time position for two years to lead the project through the planning process, accomplishment of the exercise and the final evaluation- and the way forward. The extensive exercise included 5 operational scenarios, table tops and works shops, in addition to an observers program for 90 representatives from 42 different countries.

To achieve maximum effect and learning during such project, a thorough planning and preparation process is crucial. This results in wider networks, improved competence, and an optimal defined and bounded scenario.

The project performs an extensive evaluation and way forward to improve the systematic follow-up from the exercise. This will ensure that future exercises will gain from the learning points, and to improve the collective cooperation within large scale marine pollution exercise. Results from the exercise will be shared in the presentation.

Main Results

After having decided that it was strategically important to arrange a full scale exercise within the area of oil spill and hazardous substance accidents, the Norwegian Coastal Administration decided to apply for project funding through the European Commission (DG ECHO). The exercise would aim to improve the national and international collaboration between actors in the operative emergency preparedness in the Norwegian area of Skagerrak.

Working with an application through the EU funding system required a pre-project where the superior aims and goals were defined. It also enforced a planning phase and evaluation- and forthcoming period that encapsulated the actual operational exercise. The tendency in emergency and exercise of operation, might be that there is too much focus on the operational exercise, and too little focus on planning, evaluation and following up on the findings from the exercise.

The Exercise SCOPE 2017 is a two year project, or rather a 2-year exercise, where the learning already started in the application phase, defining aims and objectives, discussing the scope and needs and prioritise the most important areas of training and learning. The further nine month planning phase gave all involved partners and participants a high degree of learning and improved their individual competence. Additionally, and even more important, is the common knowledge, skills and attitudes regarding cooperation and collaboration within the emergency response of accidents involving vessels, oil spill and hazardous substances.

The planning phase consisted of three planning conferences (Initial-, Main- and Final- Planning conferences, shortened IPC, MPC and FPC respectively), in addition to planning group meetings, cross-organisational discussion and on site surveys. Already at the IPC all participating organisations were challenged to define their own aims and objectives, that should support and strengthen the overall defined aim and objective in SCOPE 2017. It was also important for the project management that each organisation realized their own responsibility to ensure their aims were implemented in the exercise scenario.

The planning conferences had three elements: **Networking**, where the delegates would meet, discuss, talk and get (better) known to each other, **Competence refill** as presentation from relevant specialists, and finally, of course, **Plan** the operational exercise. To achieve maximum effect and learning during the field exercise, the scenario and inject process is crucial. The scenario will, in the end be a compromise of all wishes and expectations from the involved parties. A common understanding across areas of operation, organisations and participants is essential to selected the most important elements and to compose an optimal scenario overall.

As a full scale exercise within the area of oil spill pollution, the operational part of SCOPE 2017 included sub scenarios for Chemical at sea (MIRG), Oilspill at sea, Chemical at shore, Shoreline response and Investigation. To compose the full picture of such incident, and to ensure that aspects which we normally do not exercise, a separate place of refuge table top exercise and claims management workshop were linked to the exercise. To test the international notification and request for assistance procedures, it was also conducted as a separate process three weeks prior the full scale exercise. It was later finalised with a workshop to capture lessons learned and to share experience. Finally, in addition to the exercise itself, it is challenging to organise a good and relevant program for observers, VIP's and others.

To complete the international cooperation, EU including EMSA was involved in the exercise, together with Denmark, Sweden, Iceland and Germany. Altogether 30 different organisations were working together during the exercise week, and representatives from 44 different countries were present in the area.

The Exercise SCOPE 2017 was planned with a longer period for evaluation and future work. The evaluation is divided in three levels; 1) Overall conclusion, 2) Project evaluation by an evaluation team and 3) Individual evaluation by each organisation. The Evaluation Workshop and the Way Forward Seminar are led by an evaluation manager and his team. The result will be, in accordance to the EU requirements, two written textual reports (documents) summarising the most important findings and actions to follow up on, the more traditional way of finalizing an exercise.

In a report to Stortinget in Norway it is argued that: *“systematic follow-up and learning from exercises and incidents is important for improving the ability to handle future incidents. The scale of exercise activity in Norway today is considerable. In recent years a number of evaluations have been carried out of both exercises and incident responses. A key conclusion has been that the learning points keep recurring”*. [1]

Therefore, 11 of the most involved participating organisations submitted an individual evaluation of the project. The findings concerning cooperation and interaction were extracted, listed in a database, and assessed and evaluated. Each of the 200 findings were given a score for different characteristics; positive/negative, severity/importance, changeability, and finally what organisation it influenced. Adding a tool to the top of the database, we are able to analyse the information and use it dynamically in further work and follow-up of the exercise.

By having thorough and dynamic evaluation material we are able to use this information systematically and learn from the exercise and next identify objectives for the exercises. This will improve the continuous work with preparedness and the learning from exercises over time, see figure I.

As we are still in the 2-year project it is too early to conclude for the total outcome of Exercise SCOPE 2017. So far the feedback has been overall positive. As a learning exercise the outcome has been high, all the way from the planning phase, through the exercise and now in the evaluation phase. The cooperation between organisations, and also across country borders has been good. This was also commented on by a number of observers. The mood, culture and working spirit has been very good, and there has been no conflict so far. This will influence the total result of Exercise SCOPE 2017.

Supporting Images or Graphs

Project Road Map

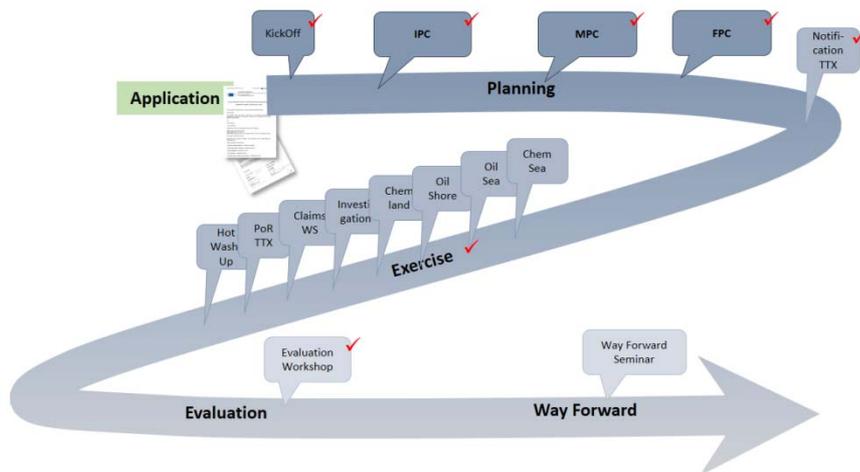
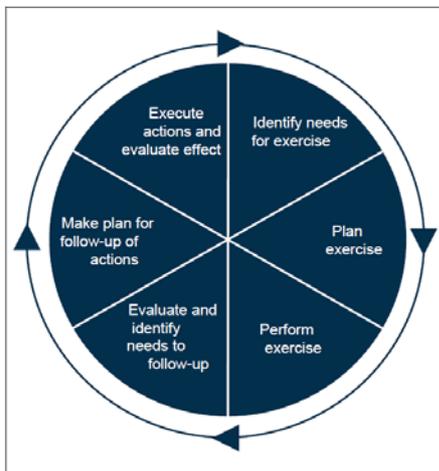


Figure I – Project Road Map



The learning wheel.

Figure II – The Learning Wheel [2]

Conclusion

There might be a tendency to use too little time for planning and post-work regarding an emergency response exercise. The planning phase for exercise SCOPE 2017 has demonstrated that this work is very important in full scale where improving cross-organisational cooperation is the main objective. The evaluation and way-forward is also important to give a good input for future exercises.

References

- [1] Meld. St. 10 (2016–2017) Report to the Storting (white paper)
- [2] Meld. St. 10 (2016–2017) Report to the Storting (white paper), Norwegian edition (translated)