

Speech Mrs. Peijs, Queens Commissioner in the province of Zeeland (Netherlands)

SPOKEN TEXT IS LEADING

Mr. Head of Cabinet, Ms Director-General, Mr. Sternheim,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to welcome you all to this conference that in a way is unique. Unique because it is a combined initiative of two different European projects, with each a very specialized audience.

Zeeland is proud to have been the lead-partner of the project Chain of Safety. From this place I want to thank our other partners in this project.

Special thanks to the partners who were partner in both Chain of Safety and in Safecoast.

Thanks also to all partners in the project Safecoast.

And finally, thanks to Interreg-NSR who made our projects possible.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This combined conference has a very special goal. The name of this conference "Risks meets Crisis". What do we mean with this ?

In this conference risk-managers meet crisis-managers. And that's not something we see normally.

(slide 1) I am told that the so called bow-tie model gives a good insight where the worlds of risk and crisis met each other.

Risk managers try to avoid a critical event to happen, where crisis managers try to keep the consequences as small as possible.

As you can see both 'worlds' rely on each other, but do not always have functional contact. After this conference I hope you agree with me that this is a bit strange.

I expect you will have a good discussion; this afternoon, but certainly tomorrow in the theme-sessions. And I expect tomorrow we can close this conference with the common belief and intention to include each-others expertise.

At the start of this conference I will lead you through some of the main experiences we came up to in Chain of Safety. Of course I will not go too much into detail. Mr. Verdult, the chairman of the steering committee of this project will do so later on, this afternoon.

First of all I must say that the combination of partners was interesting to reach the aim of the project. There were representatives from the regional government, the local government, the national government, the coastal defense, and crisis-managers. A nice mix.

And there were experts included in the field of civil services and knowledge-institutions. Using the intellectual power of academical students was an eye-opener. We were lucky to have four students of the Roosevelt Academy assisting us in developing and filling our database, and in producing our draft combined report.

The cooperation with other European projects like Safecoast but also ComCoast resulted in the common film we produced and that you saw at the start of this conference. We hope this film shows that an integrated approach in policy-making can be very wise. Spatial planners, risk-managers and crisis-managers together can come to creative solutions for our vulnerable, often densely populated, North Sea Region.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Crisis managers are a special group of experts. But I am sure this can also be said about the risk-managers.

Anyway....., for the risk-managers I think it is nice to hear how special the crisis-managers can be. Well, listen carefully.

The world of crisis-managers in The Netherlands for a long time was influenced by the cold war. A military organization was set up that kept huge amounts of logistics and dried foods. Periodically there were field-exercises to test the equipment and train the people.

From 1985 the tasks of this Civil Defence Organization were taken over by the Regional Fire Brigade. And moved from the Ministry of Defence to the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But with a much lesser budget.

The threats of our society changed from civil attack to industrial risks, including nuclear power stations.

For the risk of coastal flooding we were safe. That was the general idea, after we established our famous Delta Works.

For all new risks the crisis-managers worked out plans. Plans, mostly very detailed. No, not very detailed, but very, very, very detailed.

They were so busy working out plans that there was no time for exercises. So they got no input to improve the plans. This plan-fixation still exists, but changing legislations and a changing idea about what should be the content of a plan, and how the implementation must be organized brought us less-detailed plans. The official plans must be renewed every four years, and trained periodically.

The plan-making crisis managers until now are very busy discussing the plans with all relevant safety-partners: local governmental administration, fire-brigade, police, medical services, The Red Cross, the civil-military organization, the provincial governmental administration, the Water-boards, the regional media, and private companies that provide gas, water and electricity. And I am sure I forgot some.

So the crisis managers think they are working in a multidisciplinary way. And they do, but mostly in their own crisis-management 'world'.

The last two or three years we see a change to try and get into contact with the risk-management world. Alas, this is still on a small scale. And it highly depends on the enthusiasm of individuals.

The project Chain of Safety focussed on crisis management after concluding that risk-management was the subject of the project Safecoast. And that the world of spatial planners came together in the project ComCoast.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I wish you all have a conference that brings you new and creative ideas; and that can open your mind to look at things in a different way, in a broader perspective !

Our dikes and dunes and our other coastal defences can close the gap between risk-managers and crisis-managers. Together with spatial planners I see interesting challenges for the near future.

Let this be the way that leads to a society that is safe for coastal flooding; even more safe than we know our society is today !

I wish you a conference that stimulates creative thinking that leads to joining our different worlds !

(slide 2) And maybe this slide can help you a bit.