



Description of the Network

Title: ANDROID (Academic Network for Disaster Resilience to Optimise Educational Development)

Duration: 36 months, starting October 2011

Lead partner: Centre for Disaster Resilience, University of Salford, UK

Partnership: 64 European Institutions and 3 Third Country (non-EU) Institutions

Aim of the network

ANDROID (Academic Network for Disaster Resilience to Optimise Educational Development) aims to promote co-operation and innovation among European HE to increase society's resilience to disasters of human and natural origin. The network's teaching and research is concerned with what resilience is, what it means to society, and how societies might achieve greater resilience in the face of increasing threats from natural and human induced hazards. The network will create a European approach that will help us understand the attributes that enable physical, socio-cultural, politico-economic and natural systems to adapt, by resistance or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning. The network will also raise awareness and promote a common understanding among stakeholders of the importance of disaster resilience education and the essential role of European HEIs in improving society's ability increase disaster resilience.

Rationale for setting up the network

The ANDROID network brings together a consortium of inter-disciplinary scientists and inter-sectorial partners based at European HEIs and International Organisations with the goal of increasing society's resilience to disasters of human and natural origin. The term resilience has been widely adopted in research, policy and practice to describe the way in which they would like to reduce society's susceptibility to the threat posed by hazards. Resilience has also been used freely across a range of academic disciplines, including materials, ecology, economics and sociology. Despite this, the complex nature of disasters has led to recognition that risk reduction through increased resilience will require a strategy that is inter-disciplinary. True inter-disciplinarity only occurs where a number of separate disciplines surrender their own concepts and goals, and collectively define themselves by reference to a common set of strategic concepts and goals.

There is also widespread agreement within the literature that addressing disaster risk is an endless or continuous process that cannot stop. Early examples such as comprehensive emergency management were criticised for their excessive focus on hazards at the expense of broader contextual factors and simplistic phases that do not include a sufficient breadth of activities and supporting expertise. There is now recognition of the need for multi-actor engagement that places greater emphasis on the development of resilience, and the link between risk reduction and sustainable development. The process of reducing society's susceptibility to disaster is thus commonly visualised as a two-phase cycle, with post-disaster recovery informing pre-disaster risk reduction, and vice versa. Although usually represented as discrete stages, there is now a strong view that these stages are inter-connected, overlapping and multidimensional. The significance of this concept is its ability to promote a holistic approach to increased resilience.

ANDROID is based on an inter-disciplinary consortium of partners that comprises scientists from applied, human, social and natural disciplines. These partners from across HE have complementary skills, expertise and competences to identify and understand the varied attributes of resilience that underpin the capability and capacity of a community to cope with the threat posed by natural and human hazards. The consortium also has major International Organisations as partners, including the UNISDR, and a Stakeholder Advisory Board.

These partners offer strong inter-sectorial linkages and will assist the network in becoming a reliable partner as stakeholders seek to reduce society's vulnerability to hazards. In recognition of the global impact of disasters and the complex nature of their causes, which frequently require international action to address them, the consortium also includes three partners from third countries, who will contribute specific scientific expertise.

Detailed objectives and work plan

ANDROID will: 1) Promote discourse among European applied, human, social and natural scientists to, pool their results and findings, discuss methods and develop inter-disciplinary explanations that increase society's resilience to disasters; 2) Describe, analyse, and compare the capacity of European cities and HE to address disaster risk, and thereby reinforce the link between education and society; 3) Build the capacity of HE to address emerging challenges in disaster resilience, strengthen the link between research and teaching, and inform policy development.

ANDROID will achieve these objectives by: Managing network partners to deliver outputs and achieve intended outcomes, and by developing a virtual network platform for European disaster resilience education (WP1&2); Organising an inter-disciplinary doctoral school (WP3); Capturing and sharing innovative approaches to inter-disciplinary working in disaster resilience (WP4); Surveying European education to map teaching and research programmes in disaster resilience (WP5); Analysing the capacity of European public administrators to address disaster risk (WP6); Creating SIGs that address emerging research and teaching concerns in disaster resilience (WP7); Developing and hosting OERs for disaster resilience education (WP8); Raising awareness and promote a common understanding among stakeholders of the importance of disaster resilience education and the essential role of European HEIs in improving society's ability to withstand the threat posed by hazards. (WP9); Organising inter-disciplinary conferences and seminars that promote innovation and knowledge exchange on disaster resilience between Higher Education and relevant stakeholders (WP10); and, Planning to continue the network and sustain its impact beyond its initial funding (WP11).

In doing so, ANDROID will: increase inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral cooperation to develop innovative European education that can increase societal resilience, and thereby reduce the threat posed by natural and human hazards, a challenge of critical European and global importance.

Methodology

The ANDROID work plan is designed to meet the aim and objectives of the network, and based on the explicit interests and expertise of the partners involved. It achieves an appropriate balance between management, quality, dissemination, exploitation and implementation. It also balances the need to establish effective infrastructure and events that can sustain the network during and beyond the proposed three years, while also proposing meaningful survey and analysis projects. Each work package (WP) has a clear purpose, detailed method, and specified outputs and outcomes. The organisational structure allows for the involvement of the entire network in a transparent process in order to make sure that all goals will be achieved on schedule and within the budget. The Network Board is responsible for ensuring that the network will deliver its planned outputs and achieve its intended outcomes. It will plan and monitor activities of WPs; define and enforce quality standards; and, report to other partners through regular newsletters and the virtual network. The Board comprises the applicant and WP Leaders. Each WP has a nominated Leader who has been selected for their experience and to ensure representation from different many partner institutions in a strategic role within the network. The applicant will have responsibility for the general administration of the network, and for the contract agreement between applicant and the Commission. However, the Board will operate democratically to determine major strategic decisions. A major function of the Board will be to ensure systematic monitoring and evaluation of the network's activities. It will oversee the development of a comprehensive quality plan that will establish standards, define objectively verifiable indicators, and describe the means of verification. This verification will incorporate internal and external 'customer' evaluations,

including those of an Independent Evaluator and a Stakeholder Board. The network's quality plan will include standard reporting templates for individual WPs. WP leaders will be required to submit reports on a quarterly basis. All reports will be considered by the Network Board. Each WP leader is supported by a working group of partners that will offer specific technical input and contribute to activities. To avoid complexity, partners have been strategically chosen to perform specific tasks within the working groups. All partners not included in working groups will still be expected to attend conferences and seminars, join special interest groups, interact using a virtual network, and contribute to and review regular newsletters.

Sustaining the network

The ANDROID work plan is designed to ensure the network has a sustained impact on the target groups and achieves its intended outcomes.

A Stakeholder Board will be appointed to assist the network in realising this aim. The Board will include four experts that represent different stakeholder groups pertaining to disaster resilience education and practice. The Board will be appointed in year 1 of the network so that it can influence direction, review emerging outputs and assist in the organisation of impact events. This Board offers strong inter-sectorial linkages and will assist the network in becoming a reliable partner for public administration, civil society and industry as it seeks to reduce society's vulnerability to disaster hazards. This Board will represent a privileged channel for network valorisation. A detailed valorisation plan will be established early in the project, which will make reference to the objectively verifiable indicators and target groups identified in the network's quality plan (WP2).

The consortium also has major International Organisations as partners, including the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) and its Making Cities Resilient campaign. Cities that seek to urge local governments of the need to get ready, reduce the risks and become resilient to disasters. Mayors and their local governments are both the key targets and drivers of the campaign, which runs from 2010-2015. Three stakeholder seminars will be organised to promote the network's agenda for educational policy in the field (output 9.4). These events will target relevant stakeholders in government, educational policy and practice. The network will use its strong links with UNISDR to organise the seminars in conjunction with major regional events, thereby reducing costs but reaching an appropriate audience.

In recognition of the global impact of disasters and the complex nature of their causes, which frequently require international action to address them, the consortium also includes three partners from third countries, who will help to ensure the impact of the network extends beyond Europe's borders and identifies Europe as a leading innovator in Education to address this concern of global interest.

A sustainability plan will consider the long term sustainability of the network by exploring opportunities to extend its life beyond the initial funding. All options will be considered, including the formation of an independent Association with institutional and individual members, who pay an annual membership subscription, and applications to potential funding sources. The plan will also consider links with other networks and publications, and long term operation of the network's infrastructure, including the open educational resources platform, which will make many of the network's outputs available to relevant stakeholders and target groups, both inside and outside the network.