

## Background

Information sharing and communication is a key challenge in any crisis situation. With new technologies appearing increasingly faster, and crisis management becoming more complex as more stakeholders get a say in emergency preparedness, the research in the information systems used in emergency preparedness and crisis management is emerging as a multi-disciplinary area.

Research and development on decision support systems for radiation protection experts and decision makers and organising complex emergency response exercises are traditionally key domains of expertise in our research group. Together with the UvT (University of Tilburg), and other research groups, we started a series of activities to build a community allowing us to set up collaboration structures and participate in larger projects. The focus of the activities is on all the aspects of design, development, use and evaluation of information systems for crisis response and management.

## Objectives

The main objective of this project is to establish a community where both information systems researchers and practitioners (crisis managers and field responders) exchange their experiences and opinions, and learn from each others work. The community helps researchers to get an insight on real life cases and informs professionals about new developments and research. The first goal is to close the loop between research and reality. Formulating new ideas and priorities for research policy makers is an important spin-off of our community building work.

## Principal results

Today, ISCRAM is a user community with more than 750 registered members from about 80 countries, engaging in several information systems conferences, and organising the main conference for researchers working in our domain. The history of our activities illustrates the growing impact:

- ISCRAM started with a successful 2-day workshop in SCK·CEN's headquarter on April 19, 2004 where about 30 papers were presented and about 80 people from 21 countries attended.
- With this occasion, a community supporting web server was launched, and by the end of 2004 over 300 registered users frequently accessed the server and participated to on line discussions. The ISCRAM Community members are researchers, scholars, teachers, students, practitioners and policy makers interested or actively involved in the domain. The appeal is very international, with a participation of over 30% from North America, about 40% from Western European countries and 30 % from every other corner of the world.
- The ISCRAM community actively supported a study trip and mentored the related student research in post tsunami crisis response and rehabilitation projects in Sri Lanka.
- On April 18-20 2005, the 3 days conference ISCRAM2005 took place at the Palace of the Royal Flemish Academy in Brussels (Belgium). About 150 participants from 30 countries listened to over 40 papers, selected after a peer review, with an acceptance rate of 50%. Each day, the conference program was kicked-off with excellent keynotes.
- We organised special ISCRAM sessions and mini tracks in other IS-conferences such as the HICCS39 (January 2006, Hawaii), AMCIS2004 (August 2004, New York, US) and AMCIS2005 (August 2005, Nebraska, US).
- Discussions on the elaboration of an association are in final stage.

In the last months, we were invited to contribute ISCRAM's views in two workshops identifying and formulating the capability needs and research priorities in crisis management research areas for European research policy makers.

## Future work

While we prepare new initiatives to expand the impact of our community server, we prepare our next big conference, the ISCRAM2006 in Newark, New Jersey. 24 special sessions and workshops are announced, and we anticipate 75 presentations in this 3-day conference.

## Main contact person

Benny Carlé, [benny.carle@sckcen.be](mailto:benny.carle@sckcen.be)

## Main reference

[ISCRAM2004 and ISCRAM 2005 proceedings](#)