



Report on International Disaster Law Workshop

Cork (8th & 9th June 2017)

The second expert workshop on international disaster law took place on Thursday 8th and Friday 9th June 2017 in University College Cork. This workshop was part of a collaborative project between the [Centre for Criminal Justice and Human Rights](#) in the School of Law, University College Cork and the [Irish Red Cross](#), funded by the Irish Research Council's New Foundations award scheme.



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This workshop followed on from the Dublin workshop held in May 2017. The aim of these workshops were to bring together humanitarian practitioners and academics working in the area of international disaster law (IDL), to advance knowledge and practical application of IDL and to strengthen international networks of academics and practitioners.

Participants included representatives from non-governmental organisations such as the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Geneva), the Irish Red Cross, the British Red Cross and Development Initiatives, from the Irish Defence Forces, and academics from Ireland, Italy, the UK and the US.

Topics Covered:

Held over the course of two days, the Cork workshop consisted of a series of invited presentations and plenary discussions on key topics on international disaster law and disaster management, with a key focus on research priorities and funding opportunities. Topics covered included:

- Trends in Humanitarian Financing
- Developing an IDL Network – The Experience from Italy
- Complex Emergencies (mixed IHL/IDL scenarios)
- Regional approaches to IDL, specifically the North American Humanitarian Response Summit Initiative (NAHRS)
- State Practice in IDL
- Funding Opportunities and Challenges



Questions Raised:

Throughout the course of the presentations and plenary discussions, a range of questions and issues arose regarding the nature, content and future directions for the study of international disaster law. For example:

- How can we better develop the relationship between academia and practice within the lens of IDL? How can humanitarian practitioners better utilise legal tools and instruments? Can lawyers create / adopt language that is more accessible for non-lawyers?
- What can we learn from the development of the NAHRS? Would a similar initiative be useful at a European level or would this be duplication of existing mechanisms?
- Can a hierarchy of legal systems be determined in complex emergencies? When different areas of law are engaged, e.g. IDL, IHL, IHRL, which body of law takes precedence?
- What is the relationship between IDL and IHRL/IHL? Can the relationship between these bodies of law be complimentary or are they mutually exclusive?
- How best can we determine future trends in humanitarian funding? How can such considerations be beneficial for DRR planning?
- What type of funding opportunity would be best placed strategically to support a multidisciplinary research network on IDL?
- What possible challenges may hinder the creation of an IDL research network? How can these be mitigated? What can we learn from past and existing projects of this type?



Action Points:

It was noted at the Dublin workshop that one of the key objectives of the second meeting in Cork would be to advance discussion of priority research topics and potential funding sources for future collaborative research projects.

Participants discussed the need for creating sustainable and relevant outcomes for this IDL Project both in the short-term (over the duration of the project) and in the longer term (e.g. through the development of a multi-disciplinary research/practice network). To this end, participants considered a number of funding opportunities available in this area such as the EU COST Action Programme, Marie Curie European Training Network/Joint Degrees and Horizon 2020. The possibility of national funding sources, such as the Irish Research Council's CAROLINE Fellowship programme were also discussed.



It was suggested that the focus moving forward should be:

- ❖ **Due to the current stage of development of IDL as a field of research and practice, the creation of a wider IDL network to advance understanding and multi-disciplinary research within IDL practice and academia should be prioritised.**
- ❖ **The workshop participants should identify realistic research goals, with a multi-disciplinary approach (both practice & academia) in which new partnerships are sought, in order to facilitate concrete impact and engagement.**
- ❖ **The workshop participants, as appropriate, should identify and apply for suitable funding opportunities. The EU COST Action Programme was felt to be the best funding source to target first to develop this network.**

Practical Considerations:

The discussions focused primarily on the means by which a multi-disciplinary research network could be established, commencing with participants from the two workshops plus other identified experts.

Participants highlighted both the successes and challenges faced by establishing and managing an IDL network, and how to best mitigate and overcome these.



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Key issues/challenges discussed were:

- Communication and sustainability of a research network both in the short- and long-term.
- Need to create concrete outcomes for such a network, avoiding circularity and overlap of previously completed research projects.
- Logistical issues and the competitive nature of the requisite funding opportunities. Without funding, such a network was considered untenable for many.
- Securing and guaranteeing long-term commitment from participants if an external funding opportunity is secured, i.e. recognition of the time commitment involved in such projects.
- The short timescale before the next EU COST Action proposal deadline of 7th September 2017.

As several of the workshop participants will also be meeting at the DRR symposium being held at the University of Reading by Professor Katja Samuel in late June 2017, it was agreed that Dr Cubie would draft an initial concept note on an IDL Network under the EU COST Action Programme, and that this would be circulated in advance of the Reading symposium. Participants at the Reading symposium would then meet to discuss this initial iteration to develop this further into an EU COST Action proposal and to expand the potential partners.



Issues for Further Consideration:

Issues for further consideration that were raised during the workshop included:

- **Logistical organisation of the planned research group/project.**
- **The need for consensus on the best approach to creating and sustaining any multi-disciplinary research network, and the best means by which to contribute output to IDL for both academics and practitioners.**
- **Need for further discussions to create a concrete plan for a multi-disciplinary research project and network, in order to submit an application for funding to the next round of the EU COST Action Programme.**



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More information regarding this project can be found at: <http://disaster-law.ucc.ie/> (best viewed in Chrome) or contact:

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