Blog Post 3: "The Chaos Phase": What First Responders Told Us They *Really* Need

When we brought disaster managers from Athens, Paris, and Vienna together for our participatory design workshops (detailed in Deliverable D3.2), we asked them a simple question: "What are the biggest problems you face during an emergency?"

Their answers were incredibly consistent. The most critical gaps don't come from a lack of technology, but from a lack of *coordinated information*.

Here are the key gaps they identified:

1. The "Chaos Phase" is Blind First responders repeatedly mentioned the "chaos phase"—the **first 30-45 minutes** of an emergency. During this critical window, "little is known about the actual reality on site." Situation assessment is slow, manual, and relies on the experience of a single "scout" with a radio. This leads to drastically different situational pictures for different agencies.

2. Flawed Cross-Organizational Communication This was the most-cited problem. Different organizations (police, fire, medical) have "flawed" information flow. They use different systems, different jargon, and sometimes lack clear definitions of responsibilities. This leads to "different situational pictures" and "administrative risks" as agencies may be working with conflicting data.

3. Ineffective Public Communication A major gap is that "instructions for the general public... are often not followed." This problem is getting worse due to the spread of "false information (fake news)" on social media, which undermines public trust in official instructions.

4. No Tools for New or Rare Threats Experts pointed out a lack of clear preparedness plans for rare but high-impact events, like CBRNe (Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear) incidents or large-scale, multi-day disasters. They need tools to *plan* and *train* for these "hard to train for" scenarios.

These are the real-world problems PANTHEON is being built to solve. In our final post, we'll show you the five key applications we designed to meet these exact needs.