

Water's directors initiative on flood prevention

General introduction

After a short presentation on the issue of recent flood events in Europe, the informal meeting of Water Director of the EU, Norway, Switzerland and Candidate Countries held in Denmark Copenhagen, 21-22 november 2002, agreed to take an initiative on flood prediction and prevention.

It appears that it would be very useful to share experience on flood prediction, prevention and mitigation.

A high level meeting was held on flooding in Budapest (30 November and 1 December 2002). Germany prepared a working-level meeting on flooding on 5/6 February 2003, in Bonn, with the perspective of hosting a conference in the frame work of the UN-ECE in the beginning of 2004.

The Netherlands is considering to give special attention to the issue of floods in Europe during its presidency of the EU in the second half of 2004.

The European Commission is developing an horizontal action on prevention, preparedness and response to natural, man-made and other risks

Objective and expected outcome

Prepare a « best practice document » to be presented to the next Water Directors meeting in Athens (16-17 June 2003).

Inventory and share experiences across Europe in all the topics concerning reduction of flood risk : prediction, protection, prevention (in between mitigation).

Moreover, an additional document could review existing E.U. legislation related to flood including E.U. funds for flood prevention and protection.

Possible content of the document

The following issues could be included in the document. The interrelation between various issues should be taken into account.

1. Added value of a European approach, and identification of all the topics, which could be promoted, useful all over Europe and sustained by a European approach in river basin integrated schemes.
2. Promotion of a long-term, integrated and river basin based approach, in harmony with natural resources management and socio-economical development.

3. Promotion of flood risk assessment and mapping, combined with decision support system (DSS) tools.

4. Long-term sustainable spatial planning, based on :
 - Ü promoting building development outside of the flood prone area as often as possible,
 - Ü avoiding or stopping building development in flood plains (frequency of the flood to be determinate?)
 - Ü promoting vulnerability reduction of the properties in the flooding area, to adjust uses or modes of construction to the flood and reduce the damage and the impact of the next flood.
 - Ü Developing appropriate building code or recommendations, to reduce flood damage for every new construction or for every renovation or reconstruction
 - Ü promoting adaptation of all the networks to a flood : energy, telecommunication, road, railway, navigation

5. Flood protection, together with many types :
 - Ü structural measures in the river basin like flood control reservoirs, soil occupation and runoff management,
 - Ü structural measures along the river with protection dykes, riverbed environment management, river diversion (by-pass), artificial controlled flooding areas (with dykes and regulation system), railway and road structures which can influence the peak and the duration of the flood
 - Ü local protection, by permanent dykes or wall or non-permanent wall or barrier

6. Early warning systems based on a river-basin cooperation for monitoring and forecasting weather and rainfall and warning, including exchange of data, knowledge and technologies

7. Public awareness, which includes :
 - Ü Information on the risk: flood area mapping, flood understanding
 - Ü Promotion of a behaviour before, during and after the flood, to prevent impacts and damage, by enhancing preparedness
 - Ü Reduction of the vulnerability of housing and human settlements, to reduce the burden and the socio-economic impact to individual citizens and enterprises
 - Ü Matters related to insurance
 - Ü Relation to and vision of the river and the river plain, for a new way of life keeping the flood risk in account

8. Crisis management, on these topics which don't depend just on the government :
 - Ü Exchange of information and experience after a crisis
 - Ü Education to the management of a crisis along a major river in Europe, which could associate several countries
 - Ü International exercises
 - Ü Emergency material

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Participation and lead

The work will be organised by way of a drafting group, an open-ended working group, and through e-mail correspondence.

The working group meeting is open to all willing to participate : all parties to the Water Directors meeting and stakeholders.

Due to time constraint, the Working Group will meet once (in Brussels on 2 April 2003) and examine the first draft document. This first draft will be elaborated on the basis of documents sent to the drafting group by all participants to the Working Group concerning their experience.

The drafting group will include France and the Netherlands (as co-chairs), Hungary (to provide input from the Budapest initiative), Germany (to provide input from the Bonn workshop) and the European Commission. The drafting group is led by the Netherlands and France.

Working method

A first meeting of the drafting group will take place in the margins of the Bonn Workshop (February 5 and 6).

A second draft of the final report will be presented to the meeting of the Strategic Coordination Group on 5 May 2003.

Face to face meetings : one working group meeting, meeting of the SCG. Drafting group meetings. Most of the work through e-mail exchanges.

Financing

No external financing envisaged.

Timetable

- 5/6 February : meeting of the drafting group.
- 21 February : presentation of the terms of reference to the SCG meeting and discussion.
- 28 February : documents sent by all participants to the working group concerning their experience.

Preparation of the first draft.

- 14 March : meeting of the drafting group in Brussels.
- 2 April : working group meeting and meeting of the drafting group, in Brussels.

Preparation of the second draft.

- 25 April : second draft sent to water directors.
- 5 May : presentation to the SCG meeting and discussion.

Preparation of the third draft.

- 23 May : meeting of the drafting group, in Brussels.
- 30 May : third draft sent to water directors.
- 16-17 June : presentation to water directors.

Draft review by the Drafting Group

Date: 6 February 03