

Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Protection in the Danube River Basin

Summary

Historically, and most recently in August 2002, disastrous flood events have occurred in the Danube River basin. In response to the damages, the **International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)** decided to establish the long-term Action Programme for Sustainable Flood Prevention in the Danube River Basin.

The first step is the development of a framework Action Programme which is based on the sustainable flood protection programmes developed in the various Danube countries as well as on networking existing structures and using the future-oriented knowledge base accumulated through a wide range of activities over the past decade. The overall goal of the Action Programme is to achieve a long term and sustainable approach for managing the risks of floods to protect human life and property, while encouraging conservation and improvement of water related ecosystems. In addition, the Action Programme needs to be specified in further detail for sub-basins.

At the beginning of the Action Programme there is a description of the general hydrological and climate characteristics of the Danube River Basin as well as an overview of floods and flood protection. The section on “General considerations, basic principles and approaches” of the Action Programme refer primarily to UN-ECE Guidelines on Sustainable Flood Prevention, EU Best Practices on Flood Prevention, Protection and Mitigation and to EU Communication on flood risk management, COM(2004)472. The major principles advocated are: (i) the shift from defensive action against hazards to management of the risk and living with floods (ii) the river basin approach taking into account the Water Framework Directive, (iii) joint action of government, municipalities and stakeholders towards flood risk management and awareness raising, (iv) reduction of flood risks via natural retention, structural flood protection and hazard reduction, and (v) solidarity.

The **four major basin-wide targets** of the Action Programme, that will be further defined and elaborated by the Flood Protection Expert Group of the ICPDR:

- Improvement of flood forecasting and early flood warning systems; interlinking national or regional systems
- Support for the preparation of and coordination between sub-basin-wide flood action plans
- Creating forums for exchange of expert knowledge
- Recommendation for a common approach in assessment of flood-prone areas and evaluation of flood risk.

At the **sub-basin level**, six targets have been identified in the Action Programme:

- To reduce the adverse impact and the likelihood of floods in each sub-basin through the development and implementation of a long-term flood protection and retention strategy based on the enhancement of natural retention as far as possible
- To improve flood forecasting and warning suited to local and regional needs as necessary.
- To increase the capacity building and raise the level of preparedness of the organizations responsible for flood mitigation
- To develop flood risk maps
- To harmonize design criteria and safety regulations along and across border sections.
- To prevent and mitigate pollution of water caused by floods.

For sub-basin measures, the Action Programme provides a recommended structure of the flood action plans and gives an overview of activities to be considered during their preparation.

Decisions on the framework of implementation of the sub-basin Action Plans is the task and responsibility of the countries affected, according to their national legislation as well as their bilateral and multilateral agreements.

Financial resources necessary for the implementation of the Action Programme should be based on the national budgets and other national sources, on EU funds, including new cohesion policy funds, and on the loans from International Financing Institutions.

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