

Background paper

How to cope with the challenge of floods

Introduction

The Floods Directive entered into force on 26 November 2007. The purpose of the Directive is to establish a framework for the assessment and management of flood risks, aiming at the reduction of the adverse consequences for human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity associated with floods.

The Directive required Member States to make, by December 2011, preliminary assessments of flood risk (PFRA) leading to the identification of any areas that are at significant risk of flooding. By December 2013, the Member States were to have prepared flood hazard and risk maps (FHRM) showing how far floods might extend, the depth or level of water and the impacts that there might be on human health, the economy, environment and cultural heritage. The Directive also requires that the assessment of flood risk and associated mapping must be coordinated between the Member States sharing river basins. Finally, Member States have to prepare Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs), which were to be published by December 2015 and reported by March 2016. Building on the prior steps, the FRMPs should set appropriate objectives and identify measures for achieving them.

The Commission is currently assessing the 1st FRMPs and plans to report its findings to the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union by December 2018. The Commission has also recently launched an evaluation of the Floods Directive in the context of the broader Fitness Check of EU Water Law.

Challenges

Based on the Commission's preliminary assessment of the 1st FRMPs, it can be concluded that Member States made good efforts in their preparation with solid results. Nevertheless, several challenges have also become apparent, which will need to be tackled during the preparation of the 2nd FRMPs in the coming years.

The Annex of the FD foresees that the FRMPs will include the conclusions of the PFRAs, the FHRMs and Flood Risk Maps (FRMs). Indeed, the majority of Member States reported the conclusions of their PFRAs as well as the conclusions of the FHRMs in their FRMPs.

- *FRMPs should provide an explanation of the role the FHRMs played in the preparation of the FRMPs, i.e. how the process of and insights gained from preparing the maps influenced the setting of objectives and/or decisions on measures.*

In the 1st FRMPs, the objectives for the management of flood risk are in over half of the Member States not specific or measurable in terms of what should be achieved, on the location where it should

be achieved and on the timetable for achievement. Half the Member States included in the assessment made a clear link between their objectives and the measures to achieve these objectives; one in five did so only for some Units of Management (UoMs). The remaining one out of three has not established a clear link.

- *It should be clearly explained in the FRMPs how the implementation of measures will ensure achievement of objectives.*

The majority of Member States provided a list of measures and summary information for each measure. More than half provided additional elements in terms of what they are trying to achieve, where (and which area their effects will cover), how and by when. Estimates on costs of flood measures were available for about half of Member States assessed, though in many cases without covering all FRMPs or all measures. Many FRMPs provide at least some information on the monitoring processes to be followed with regards to progress achieved in the implementation of measures, though for many with little detail. About two-thirds, provided in their FRMPs, or other documents, information on the methods used for the prioritisation of measures. Fewer, one-third, used a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) in all UoMs assessed. Still, a majority of the Member States assessed have made some analysis of costs and benefits of their measures. In most Member States, most of the FRMPs assessed identified funding sources, however, in many cases with only a generic reference, identifying possible funding mechanisms rather than making budgetary commitments.

- *For the FRMPs to function as a credible planning tool, robust approaches to prioritising measures, identifying sources for funding and monitoring progress should be included.*

Specifically in terms of non-structural initiatives, the FRMPs of all Member States currently being assessed, make reference to spatial planning and/or land use, however, the extent of information varies. Almost all include measures for natural water retention in some or all of their FRMPs.

- *Generally, spatial planning and/or land use considerations should be integrated into FRMPs.*

A high share of Member States considered at least some aspects of climate change and more than one third provided strong evidence that climate change impacts were considered. However, less than half of the Member States refer to the national adaptation strategies prepared under the EU Adaptation Strategy.

- *FRMPs should consider national climate change related strategies that can contribute towards meeting their stated objectives.*