



PRESS RELEASE

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Experts present practical ideas to reduce flood risks

ZARAGOZA, Spain – More than 150 international experts and politicians met in Spain on 13 and 14 June 2007 to share new practical ideas on how to prevent and manage floods in ways that protect the environment at the same time as defending Europe's communities and economy. The conference was the climax of more than two and a half years of research and cooperation among 35 organisations in 12 countries through the EU-funded FLAPP network.

Climate change, global warming, extreme weather and rising sea levels make floods a growing threat for thousands of citizens across Europe. Planners and politicians must work better together to handle flood dangers, which are all too familiar in the region where the conference took place: the Ebro river basin suffered extreme rainfall and devastating floods in March 2007.

The FLAPP partners presented and discussed the products of their cooperation: a book detailing concrete examples of good practice at regional and local scale, a joint approach to improve cross-border flood management, and policy recommendations for different levels of government in Europe.

They encouraged flood planners to cooperate better across borders and form partnerships across river basins. Their recommendations, based on an analysis of best practice across Europe, will help regions to apply novel ideas that worked well elsewhere. The guiding principle is to implement flood measures that treat a river basin as an integrated whole, managing the river from source to mouth.

The FLAPP report recommends that natural flood plains should be developed in ways that give rivers space to flood, instead of relying on flood defences to contain them. Flood planning must respect the natural ecological functions of floods, river systems and wetlands. Flood managers need to cooperate intensively across borders, just as the floods spread through river basins without regard for frontiers.

“An integrated river basin approach is possible only if there is good communication and good understanding between all the parties concerned. Connecting people, connecting water managers, connecting institutions and connecting systems: it all sounds easy enough, but in reality it is a hell of a job,” said Alfred Evers, representative of the lead partner Euregion Meuse-Rhine.



Picture 1 Alfred Evers handing over final product book to Hans Blokland, Vice-President of the Environment Committee of the European Parliament at the final FLAPP conference, 13 June 2007 in Zaragoza, Spain

FOR MORE INFORMATION

www.flapp.org

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NOTE FOR EDITORS

Resources

The FLAPP policy recommendations, joint approach and best practice book are available for download at www.flapp.org.

Photographs are available on request.

What is FLAPP?

FLAPP stands for “Flood Awareness and Prevention Policy in border areas”. It is an EU-funded network through which local and regional flood experts from across Europe share knowledge and experience about how to prevent and forecast floods, evacuate people and limit the damage when floods happen. The network operates from January 2005 until August 2007

Why Zaragoza?

Zaragoza is a key hub for the international water debate. Decision makers and practitioners from all over the world meet each other in Zaragoza during a variety of water related events leading up to the international EXPO 2008 on Water and Sustainable Development and in the framework of the United Nations International Water Decade 2005-2015.

Partner organisations

The FLAPP network comprises 35 organisations in 12 European countries, spread over several catchment areas including the rivers Danube, Tisza, Ebro, Meuse, Rhine, Scheldt, Elbe and Oder. One partner is from outside the EU (Serbia). Participants range from local and regional water managers on the operational level to university researchers. The Euregio Meuse-Rhine (Maastricht, The Netherlands) is lead partner (see map for partner locations and catchment areas).

INTERREG IIIC programme

The FLAPP operation has received a subsidy from the programme funds within the framework of the Community initiative programme INTERREG IIIC West Zone. INTERREG IIIC is an EU-funded programme that helps Europe's regions form partnerships to work together on common projects. These projects enable regions to share knowledge and experience that will help them develop new solutions to economic, environmental and social challenges. More info: www.interreg3c.net

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