

mainstream



*mainstream is a newsletter for partners of the INTERREG III-C Network
'Flood Awareness and Prevention Policy in border areas'.*



Third FLAPP conference, Northern Ireland: improving flood awareness

The third FLAPP conference was held in Enniskillen, Northern Ireland, on the 6th and 7th of April. At the same time other areas in Europe were struck by floods. After the devastating floods in August 2002, the Elbe region in Saxony was again hit by a flood. The river Danube and one of its main tributaries, the river Tisza, also reached critical water levels. Can damage caused by floods be limited by increasing awareness of inhabitants? This conference gave partners of the FLAPP network the opportunity to exchange their knowledge and ideas on this issue.

The network's president Ed Eggink formulated some important questions relating to public awareness: "How far does public responsibility go? Are people sufficiently aware of flood risks? How can they be better informed by their local and regional governments?" By taking part in workshops and listening to presentations by experts, FLAPP partners tried to find the answers to these and other questions about flood awareness.

Space for dialogue Kate Burns from the ICBAN network welcomed all participants. She explained how ICBAN (Irish Central Border Area Network)

creates space for dialogue between organisations across the border of Northern-Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. "Because we live in between borders as well as on an island, people tend not to take the chance to learn from the world outside those borders. FLAPP provides the opportunity to engage in a European network with transnational relationships." She also gave examples of interesting projects and awareness campaigns to improve communication between people living in border areas.

Insuring against floods

Tom Bolger of the Office of Public Works in Ireland presented a great example of how the Irish government makes the public more aware of flood dangers. In 2005 the Republic of Ireland developed a new national policy to minimise the risks caused by floods. More information on their successful awareness campaign can be found in this newsletter. Another point of view was presented by a representative of the insurance sector: how do insurance companies inform the public about insuring against flood damage? In the UK, insurance companies play an important part in informing the public. The ABI (Association of British Insurers) cooperates closely with the UK government.

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“It’s difficult to involve people who don’t know they are at risk. But if they have to pay money to insurance companies, this automatically increases their awareness”, said Matt Crossman of the ABI.

On schedule What is the current status of the FLAPP network? Annelieke Laninga-Busch looked back at several successful FLAPP events in 2005. At the moment there are more than 40 projects in the FLAPP database. Six study visits and three conferences have already been organised. The scope of the project has also become more clear: after the presidium meeting in Cologne, earlier this year, it has been decided to focus even more on border areas. Furthermore, several partners have launched initiatives such as developing a cross-border flood map, guidelines for citizens and an inventory study of decision support systems for calamity management. In general, the network is on schedule!

Workshops This time the conference workshops were divided into themes, instead of into components. A total of 8 workshops were organised

during the conference. Participants had the opportunity to take part in workshops that interested them most. For example, a public relations company from London called Pinnacle PR showed how to do PR work effectively, while participants of another workshop discussed how other European projects deal with providing information to the general public and stakeholders. Once again, partners took the opportunity to intensify relationships within the network and make agreements for future actions.

Excursions The conference had started on Wednesday with an excursion organised by the Rivers Agency to Portora Lock at the Lower Lough Erne nearby Enniskillen, Northern Ireland. On Thursday a field trip with school children took place at a local stream nearby the conference venue. You can read more about this on the next page. The conference was closed on Friday with another excursion, this time organised by the Electricity Supply Board to Cathaleen’s Fall Hydro-Electric Station at the river Erne nearby Ballyshannon, Republic of Ireland.

EU flood directive An important result of the conference is that partners believe the proposed EU flood directive should focus more strongly on cross border aspects of flood management. In particular preventive measures with positive effects across borders should be stimulated through the flood directive. Partners agreed on an amendment to article 9.4: ‘Flood risk management plans shall include measures which contribute to the management of flood risks in upstream or downstream regions as much as possible.’ The FLAPP amendment to the proposed EU Flood Directive has been sent to the European parliament one week after the conference. ■

“Plan. Prepare. Protect.”



“Individuals also carry responsibility for the protection of their families and property. People whose properties are at risk should inform themselves about the practical measures they can take to plan and prepare in advance of a flood, so they can protect themselves if they are affected by flooding,” said Tom Bolger of the Office of Public Works in Ireland on Thursday the 6th of April.

As mentioned in the first article of this newsletter, the Republic of Ireland developed a new national policy. Elements of this new approach are acceptance of living with floods, and public availability of flood hazard information and maps. Handy information booklets are available, and a recently launched website (www.flooding.ie) provides practical tips on what to do before, during and after a flood.



Some recommendations for public awareness campaigns: “Communication needs to have impact but at the same time should be calm, reasoned, authoritative, easy to understand and not too detailed. Brief messages with more detailed backup information seems an appropriate tactic. However, the task of capturing attention for communication is not an easy one!” ■

interview

partner in the picture



André Freiwald

“Flood maps are a great tool for raising public awareness!”

The Saxon State agency for Environment and Geology in Germany (partner 25) has taken the initiative for a cross-border pilot-project, co-financed by the FLAPP network. To improve protection against floods in the cities Görlitz (Germany) and Zgorzelec (Poland), flood

information maps and risk zone maps have been developed. Unique is that these maps cover both sides of the border area.

The General Flood Information Map is based on a scientific water risk map, which shows the different risk levels of flood events in local situations. An important new aspect of this map is the integration of crucial information from the areas of calamity defence, technical infrastructure, economy, culture and social life.

The Municipal Risk Zone Map will emphasize the already existing flood danger. The flood endangerment is shown by indicating risk zones, which are determined through overlapping intensity and frequency of a flood event. Additional information with regard to endangered infrastructure, municipal planning and calamity defence will also be available on the map.

“The maps are publicly available and will give inhabitants actual information on possible flooding in their area, which makes it a great tool for raising awareness!”, says André Freiwald from the Saxon State agency for Environment and Geology in Germany. ■

Vital Signs field trip

with local school children

On the first day of the FLAPP conference, twelve schoolchildren from different schools in the area accompanied the conference participants to a nearby stream. Everyone received a palmtop and the children helped the European flood experts to complete a ‘Vital Signs record’, which contains a range of information on the water and the surrounding environment. Even though young at heart, the children have already learned a lot about water quality and the environment in general. “It’s never too early to start with raising the level of awareness!” says Gretta McCarron, who supervises the children during this project.

To make children aware of the environment in which they live, a study programme for primary school children has been developed with funding from the INTERREG III A programme. This programme, called Vital Signs, enables children to study and evaluate the quality of the rivers and streams in their area. They do actual field work by measuring various aspects related to water in their area, such as stream characteristics and features of the riparian habitat. They enter all their data into a specially developed program on their palmtops. Records made by the children are uploaded on



the Vital Signs website. The website will be used to increase cross-border communications between schools via discussions between pupils from schools on both side of the border. This educational programme has proved to be a big success; while children see it as an adventurous field trip, they become aware of the environment around them and how to handle it with care. ■

Next steps

Guidelines for citizens In one of the workshop sessions, Peter Notten of the Roer & Overmaas water board in the Netherlands showed how people in the areas around the river Meuse were recently informed about potential flood risk in their area. This local information programme includes a brochure and field exercises. As a result of the conference workshop, generic guidelines for citizens on how to reduce the impact of floods will be created by the FLAPP network. These guidelines will be usable throughout Europe, rather than being applicable to a specific area only.

National PR team Elsbeth Smedley of Pinnacle PR, London, made clear why PR is so important. "PR can build and enhance the reputation of a network and can create support for FLAPP initiatives. It can also help to change public opinion, as well as public policy." On Thursday, the workshop topic was how to raise awareness in general, while on Friday the workshop focused on establishing a pan-European PR team for the FLAPP network. This team will consist of one partner per country, who will manage the PR and communication activities for all FLAPP partners within his or her own country.

Other activities Several activities are planned for the coming months. The project database will be developed more into a 'buy & sell' marketplace, where partners can ask for specific information and easily find projects in which they are interested, as well as offer their own organisation's projects. As in past years, study visits will be organised again. Some dates have already been set; see the agenda below for more information. The importance of flood risk maps was once again emphasised during this conference. An expert workshop on this subject will be held in September 2006.



Towards policy recommendations The policy working group will be preparing an approach to improve cooperation in transnational catchments. During a workshop in Enniskillen, several partners have committed themselves to compile a regional case study on cross border cooperation in flood management. They have been asked to describe benefits of (further) cross border cooperation in their area, obstacles and challenges for the future. These case study examples will be analysed and discussed on 25-27 October '06 during the fourth FLAPP conference. Aim of this conference will be to identify elements of success to improve cooperation in transnational catchments and to define policy recommendations. ■

Agenda

*= Details to be determined later on

WHEN	WHAT	WHERE	CONTACT INFO	
2006	16-17 May	NOAH/Viking project: calamity management exercise in border area Germany-The Netherlands	Gelderland / Overijssel (NL) and Nordrhein-Westphalia (D)*	pengel@stowa.nl
	17-18 May	EU flood directive: European floods conference organised by Austrian government	Vienna, Austria lands	www.wassernet.at
	17-19 May	RIVERCROSS project: conference on cross border cooperation in Evros basin	Alexandroupolis, Greece	www.rivercross.nl
	7-8 June	FLAPP Presidium meeting: preparation 4th conference	Cologne, Germany	project.manager@flapp.org
	June/July*	FLAPP study visit: flood protection system & cooperation between Hungary-Romania and Hungary-Serbia Montenegro	Szeged/Gyula, Hungary	labdyj@atikovizig.hu
	12-14 July	FLAPP policy working group: case studies on cooperation in transboundary catchments & how to overcome cross-border obstacles	The Netherlands / Hungary*	bart.swanenvleugel@raadvenw.nl
	28-30 Aug.	FLAPP study visit: emergency management in Schelde border area & generic guidelines for citizens	Euregio Scheldemond, Belgium and The Netherlands*	astrid.vliebergh@oost-vlaanderen.be
	13-15 Sept.	FLAPP study visit: nature development and flood management	Nijmegen / Arnhem (NL) and Emmerich / Kleve (DE)*	e.h.kloosterboer@minInv.nl
	Aug./Sept.	FLAPP expert meeting: flood maps	Dresden, Germany*	Andre.Freiwald@lfug.smul.sachsen.de
	25-26 Oct.	FLAPP 4th conference: how to improve flood management in transboundary catchments?	Debrecen, Hungary	judit.erdei@tikovizig.hu
	27 Oct.	FLAPP study visit: Hungarian/Ukrainian flood monitoring system	Nyiregyhaza / Miskolc, Hungary*	szakog@fetikovizig.hu
	Oct./Nov.	EXCIFF network: 3rd workshop forecasting models in relation to meteorological data	To be determined*	frederique.martini@ecologie.gouv.fr

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