

EU FLOODS DIRECTIVE: SHARING A METHODOICAL PROCESS TO IMPROVE FLOOD RISK MANAGEMENT

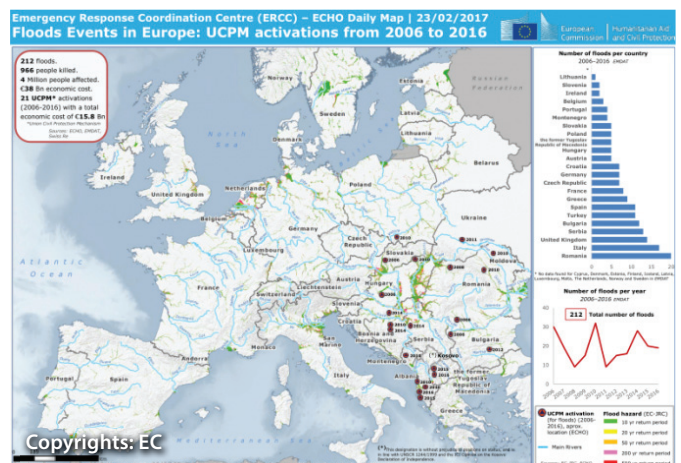
During the last EU CP Forum held in March 2018 in Brussels, the European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Managements Mr Christos Stylianides made it clear for all participants that climate change “is not a fake news”. All countries need to be prepared to face more frequent disasters caused by natural hazards with various intensity, but always serious human, social and economic consequences. Floods are among these major risks that target Eastern Partner countries, and not only at national level. The cross-border dimension is inescapable, as all countries have at least one transnational river basin. The PPRD East 2 Programme provided a comprehensive support to the Partners Countries to understand, and in aligning their national legislation to the EU Floods Directive.

From disasters to regulation

The EU Floods Directive on the assessment and management of flood risks originates from a number of severe floods experienced between 1998 and 2009 in Europe, including the catastrophic ones along the Danube and Elbe rivers in summer 2002.

Impact was massive: some 1126 deaths, the displacement of about half a million people and at least €52 billion in insured economic losses¹. In addition to economic and social damage, floods can have severe environmental consequences, for example when installations holding large quantities of toxic chemicals are inundated or wetland areas destroyed.

All these consequences and respective experiences marked 2005 as a turning point: EU Member States decided to have joined actions in order to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, environment, cultural heritage and economic



The cross-border dimension of flood risk at the heart of regional cooperation

Since 2010, the PPRD East 2 Programme is cooperating with the Eastern Neighbourhood Partner Countries to support them in aligning their national legislation to the EU Floods Directive, and for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, approximating it to the EU *acquis communautaire*. Within these efforts the Programme assists Partners Countries in their path towards the transposition and the implementation of the EU Floods Directive at different levels. Activities focus on capacity building actions, including the development of regional guidelines, sharing experiences and good practices, as well as national roadmaps for the transposition of the EU Floods Directive and the implementation of an integrated approach.

After working together for more than three years, concrete and tangible progress can be noticed, both at regional and at national level.

At regional level, and in addition to the regional guidelines, the Programme addressed flood risk management in transnational river basins by facilitating the development of a draft Flood Risk Management Protocol for the Trans-boundary Dniester River Basin. The Protocol is based on the principles of the EU Floods Directive and, when approved, will overcome the limitations of the existing agreement that mostly address floods response with limited attention to prevention and preparedness.

“Cross-border dimension of the flood risk is crucial in the region as all countries have at least one transnational river basin”, explained Mr Marco Massabò, Flood Risk Management and Disaster Loss Data expert in the

PPRD East 2 Programme.

“Flood Risk Management in transnational river basins requires a high level of coordination and the Draft Protocol for Flood Risk Management for the Dniester River Basin can be a starting point to trigger bilateral and regional coordination. It can and should be used as an example for developing Flood Risk Management protocols in other transnational river basins”, he added.

At national level, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine are firmly going toward the approximation and implementation of EU Floods Directive, whereas Armenia and Azerbaijan have established a positive national dialogue among institutions for the modification of the national legal framework.

Working together for a sustainable flood risk management

In **Armenia** efforts are now focusing on introducing main provisions of EU Floods Directive in the national Water Code with the support of the PPRD East 2 Programme.

In **Azerbaijan** an inter-institutional working group that involves several ministries and other Governmental organisations, intends to prepare a secondary legal act on Flood Risk Management in line with the EU Floods Directive.

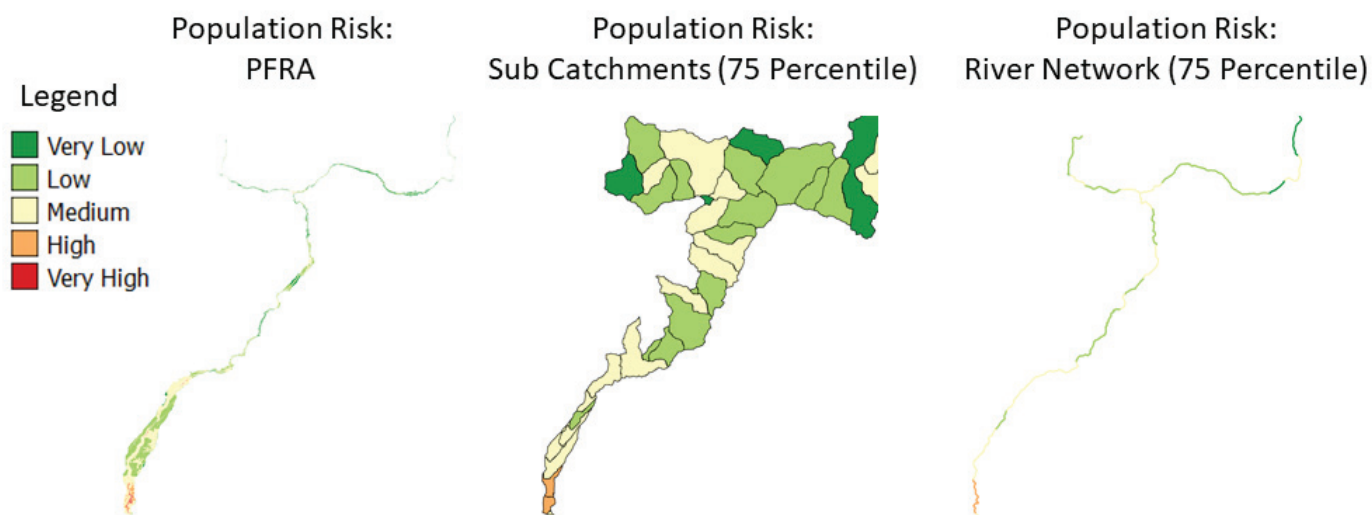
The approach adopted by **Georgia** for the approximation to EU Floods Directive consists of inclusion of the main provisions of the EU Floods Directive into Georgian national legislation and in developing methodologies for flood hazard and risk mapping as well as for Flood Risk Management Plans. The country tested a national Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment methodology on the pilot river basin Tskentskali, a tributary of the Rioni river. The tests results will be used to develop the national Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment methodology as a secondary legislation.

In **Ukraine** the New Water Code, approved in October 2016 by the Parliament, includes the main provision of the EU Floods Directive into national legislation. The Inter-Departmental Flood Risk Management Working Group has developed Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping methodologies and has completed a first preliminary flood risk assessment thus identifying the areas at significant risk of flooding in the entire country.



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Floods in Europe



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Results of Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment and Areas of Potentially Significant Flood Risk delineation in Georgia

In **Moldova** the EU Floods Directive has been transposed into national legislation. Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment, and Flood Hazard and Risk Mapping have been developed within the Flood Risk Management Project funded by the European Investment Bank. The review provided by the PPRD East 2 demonstrated that both the assessment and the mapping are fully in compliance with the EU Floods Directive requirements and with the EU good flood risk management practice. Based on this review, the next step for Moldova is to adopt the assessment and the mapping as the national referenced flood risk assessment methodology and mapping approach.

Although each PPRD East 2 Partner Country is differently progressing in the reform of the flood risk management sector, all get involved into a national process for aligning their national legislation to the EU Floods Directive or to include principle and key provisions of the EU Floods

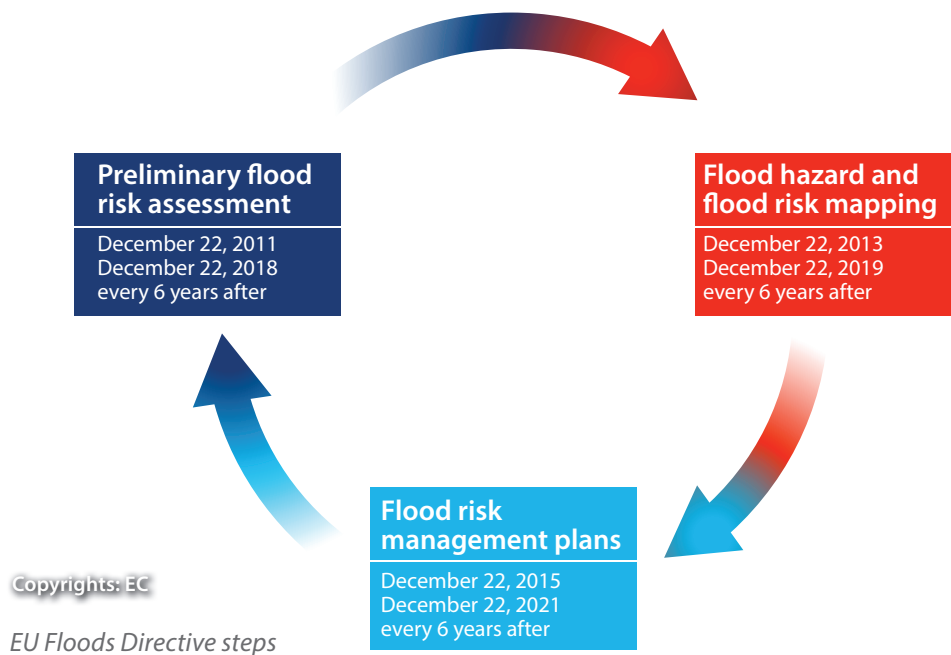
Directive into national legislation.

Needless to say, challenges remain for the future. "Investing in disaster risk prevention is one of the challenges that all countries, including PPRD East 2 Partner Countries, are facing; international policies offer a good opportunity to Governments to fill the existing gaps in flood risk prevention", says Mr Massabò.

In terms of legislation, the key point is to ensure the firm continuation of this process as well as the constant commitment of national authorities for reforming the legal and institutional flood risk management setting. Another challenge is the development of the capacity of public administration to prepare or evaluate flood hazard and risk maps as well as flood risk management plans because "the implementation of the EU Floods Directive requires a number of multi-disciplinary competences and skills", stated Mr Massabò.



Flooding in Central Europe



The EU Floods Directive requirements and implementation

Implementation of the EU Floods Directive requires comprehensive national commitment. The Directive proposes a step-by-step implementation: preparing a preliminary flood risk assessment and an identification of areas of potential significant flood risk, developing flood hazard maps and flood risk maps for each identified area, and developing flood risk management plans for each unit of management. The full implementation of the three steps involves multiple institutions from water management organizations to local and river basin authorities as well as civil protection and disaster risk management institutions. The Directive also requires that the flood hazard and flood risk maps as well as flood risk management plans for cross-border river basins are prepared in cooperation and coordination with neighbouring countries. The EU Floods Directive implementation is also taking into consideration long term developments, including climate change and

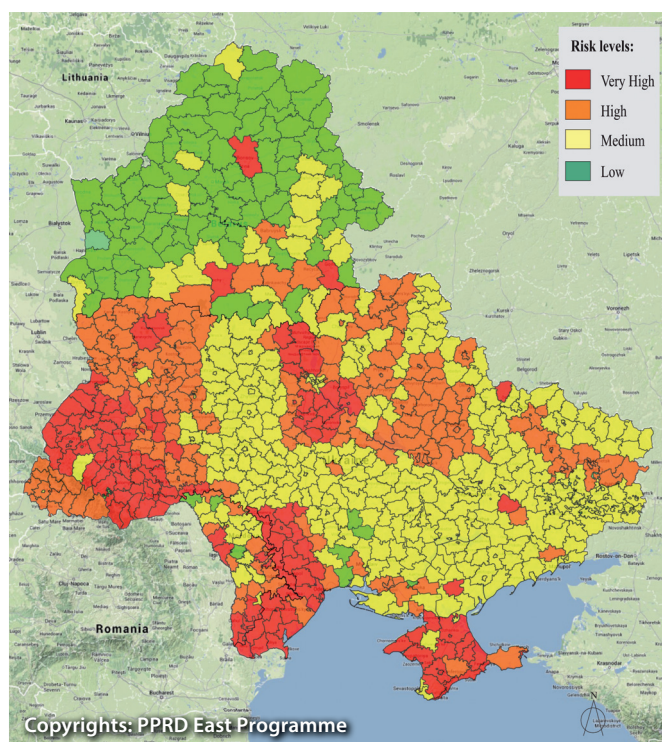
sustainable land use practices in the flood risk management cycle addressed in the Directive. EU Member States have finalized all three steps of the EU Floods Directive by 2015. To support the implementation of the Directive, a Working Group on Floods (Working Group F) has been established at the European Union level. In order to improve access to environmental information and reports, an electronic data and information system on water called WISE (Water Information System for Europe)² has been launched on 22 March 2007. The implementation of the EU Floods Directive steered a positive and constructive dialogue and cooperation among multiple institutions and stakeholders, encouraging coordination of local and national authorities, exchanging data and information within countries, with neighbourhoods and with the European Commission.

² <https://water.europa.eu>

Accessibility to Flood Risk Information

An important element of the EU Floods Directive is transparency towards the public. All prepared assessments, maps and plans are available to the public. Member States usually publish flood hazard and flood risk maps on national websites where they can be consulted or downloaded.

The accessibility to disaster and flood risk assessment information is facilitated by utilisation of modern data management systems. These systems are providing the opportunity to different users to access disaster risk information simultaneously through the internet. One example of this technology is the Electronical Regional Risk Atlas (ERRA) developed within the EU funded PPRD East Programme. ERRA can serve as a data-hub for sharing disaster risk data and maps between all levels of institutions and organizations, and ultimately the general public. IT tools like ERRA have the distinct advantage to increase accessibility and comparability of disaster risk information among multiple stakeholders, but only if permanently maintained and updated content-wise, and regularly upgraded system-wise.



ERRA Floods Map

HIGHLIGHTS

An additional six-month support to the Partner Countries

The six Partner Countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine) will benefit from an additional six months support from the PPRD East 2 Programme that has been extended until the end of May 2019 by the European Commission.

This six months extension will allow further development and enhancement of Partner Countries' national civil

protection and disaster risk management systems. Aligning national legislation to the EU disaster risk management *acquis communautaire* and good practice will be continued, as well as the strengthening of the regional cooperation among the Partner Countries and the efforts on bringing Partner Countries closer to the EU Civil Protection Mechanism.

The 4th Steering Committee met under the new EC project management

On 26 October 2018, the 4th Steering Committee brought together the Partner Countries' members and the representatives of the European Commission under the new EC project management. Extended until May 2019, the PPRD East 2 Programme presented achievements made since the beginning and the activities planned to be implemented till the end of the Programme. This meeting also provided an opportunity for the Steering Committee members to express needs and expectations for the future and to discuss them with the European Commission and the Member States.



4th Steering Committee group photo