



RESOLUTION:

Measures to combat the occurrence and damage caused by severe flooding in Europe

Adopted at the YEPP Council Meeting in Bucharest, Romania 21st May 2016

Recognising:

- The combination of a growing population with the increasing prevalence of the effects of climate change has resulted in an increase in severe flooding in Europe, and this will further increase in the coming years;
- Between 1980 and 2010, 37 European countries registered 3,563 floods in total. The highest number of floods in this period was in 2010, with 321 floods¹;
- Annual flood losses are expected to increase fivefold by 2050 and up to 17-fold by 2080²;
- In 2015, many EU countries including Ireland, Great Britain, Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and France experienced severe flooding which resulted in casualties and widespread damage to property and livelihoods;
- Short-term responses to flooding, particularly the installation of flood prevention measures along rivers and the dredging of rivers, are compromised by regulations contained in the EU Habitats Directive, the EU Flooding Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive;
- Member states or regions that are severely affected by flooding may apply for financial support from the EU Solidarity Fund, provided that the cost of the damage amounts to

¹ <http://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/floodplain-management-reducing-flood-risks>

² <http://www.eea.europa.eu/highlights/floodplain-management-reducing-flood-risks>

more than 0.6% of Gross National Income or €3 billion, or alternatively 1.5% of regional GDP³;

- The lack of adequate flood defences in many areas sometimes means that residents cannot be insured against flood damage;
- Responses to flooding must combine short term emergency responses with long term strategic planning in relation to building projects and environmental protection measures.

Acknowledging:

- While the European Commission has argued that flood prevention measures such as dredging are not specifically prohibited by EU legislation, the EU Water Framework Directive effectively prevents member states from undertaking dredging in order to protect certain habitats⁴;
- Whilst the EU Water Framework Directive allows for the possibility of exceptions due to unforeseen circumstances such as flooding or drought, this does not apply to water management policies undertaken in advance of flooding events⁵;
- All Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) payments are conditional on land being kept in “Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition”, which may mitigate against the possibility of flooding, although the definition of these conditions is decided at national level;
- The EU Flood Directive provides for the assessment of flooding risk along rivers and the public’s right to information about such risks⁶;
- Agri-environmental funding schemes grouped under the EU’s Rural Development Programmes encourage greening measures such as tree-planting, although the modus operandi of those schemes is decided at national level⁷;

³ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=URISERV:g24217>

⁴ <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/floods-eu-laws-not-to-blame-insists-european-commission-1.2485660>

⁵ <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/floods-eu-laws-not-to-blame-insists-european-commission-1.2485660>

⁶ <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/suggesting-that-the-eu-is-to-blame-for-floods-is-completely-without-foundation/>

⁷ <http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/ECintheUK/suggesting-that-the-eu-is-to-blame-for-floods-is-completely-without-foundation/>

- All European countries are signatories to the Paris Agreement (COP21) to combat climate change;
- The incidences of flooding are increased by poor planning decisions, particularly the development of largescale buildings on natural floodplains.

YEPP Calls On:

- The European Commission to review the EU Habitats Directive, the EU Flooding Directive and the EU Water Framework Directive in order to:
 - Limit regulations so as to allow Member States greater freedom to dredge rivers where it is deemed necessary, whilst taking into account the importance of protecting natural habitats;
 - Provide for exceptions to the directives in advance of severe flooding where there is a case for flood defences to be pre-emptively installed;
 - Permit member-states to define what constitutes a habitat in need of protection;
- Member States to ensure that flood prevention and waterway management measures form part of development proposals in all relevant areas;
- Member States to follow the examples set by Germany and the Netherlands following the Rhine floods of 1995 by restoring and maintaining certain natural floodplains to prevent flooding elsewhere⁸;
- Member States to reinforce “greening” policies such as increased forestation and vegetation along rivers in order to mitigate against the threat of flooding;
- The EU and Member States to ensure that best practice is promoted in relation to construction on floodplains.

⁸ <https://www.newscientist.com/article/2075712-floods-in-europe-will-cause-five-times-more-damage-by-2050/>