

The impact of the EU Flood Risk Directive on spatial planning using examples from French and Polish case study sites

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Abstract (500 words max):¹

River and flash floods are a recurring, European wide threat that can imply negative consequences for the society. The European Commission reacted to the occurrence of several catastrophic events in recent decades by adopting the Flood Risk Directive (FRD) to establish a framework that aims at reducing adverse consequences for humans, environment, economy and cultural heritage associated with floods in the EU. Member States were required to implement the content of the Directive into national law by December 2009, thus initiating an EU wide and cross-border, intergovernmental flood risk assessment and management. According to the requirements of the FRD, EU countries need to carry out preliminary risk assessments, prepare flood hazard and risk maps and finally elaborate flood risk management plans.

Spatial planning can be seen in this context as a major addressee of the prepared information. After all, spatial planning needs to take decisions on the long-term usage of space in terms of allocation of different land-uses, leaving areas free of further development or building provisions to promote risk adaptation and can significantly contribute to minimising exposures to floods. Implications of the FRD might therefore be quite essential, since the Directive facilitates the provision of information about hazards and risks which might be of great importance for spatial planning

However, the FRD is adjusted to national standards and transferred into national law, which is why it is differently implemented in EU Member States. Furthermore practices and instruments that have already been in place before the Directive was adopted need to be considered. Accordingly, the Directive most likely has different impacts on spatial planning in different EU countries. Taking evidence from case study sites in the French Alps (Ubaye & Tinnée Valley) and the Polish Carpathians (Wieprzówka Catchment), the research is focused on two specific examples. Drawing on document analysis and expert interviews, actual changes implied by the Directive that had direct or indirect consequences for spatial planning practices will be emphasized.

Results show, that the FRD has clear impacts on spatial planning. In the Polish case study site positive impacts include the elaboration of more quality flood maps that entail more detailed information, which strongly support planning activities. This positive impact,

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however, is limited to certain areas, while other hazard exposed areas will not be mapped. While previous flood protection studies, as carried out by the Regional Water Boards, covered more, even small catchments, new maps will only be made for areas identified in the Preliminary Flood Risk Assessment. As a result, availability of hazard maps will be restricted. In the French case study site flood maps as required by the FRD might be of vital importance for hazard exposed municipalities which do not dispose of a risk prevention plan ("Plan de prévention de risque"). Furthermore they might serve as a useful basis for the elaboration of new risk prevention plans. Last but not least, due to their more elaborate information hazard maps can provide additional facts and details on hazard levels and can therefore be consulted for more adequate decisions on future land-use.

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