

STAR-FLOOD completes case study on flood risk management in Europe

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From 2000 to 2013, floods resulted in EUR 5.5 billion in annual losses in Europe, and this figure is set to increase fivefold by 2050 according to a study published last year in *Nature*. European governments have been hard at work trying to ensure sustained protection from floods by developing dykes, dams or floodgates, but are such defence strategies alone sufficient?

'We should also focus on prevention, mitigation, flood preparation and recovery,' explains Prof. Peter Driessen of Utrecht University in the presentation video of STAR-FLOOD. The project, which kicked off in October 2012 with EUR 5.4 million in EU funding, aims to analyse,

explain, evaluate and design policies to better deal with flood risks from rivers in urban agglomerations across Europe.

STAR-FLOOD has now reached the end of its core Work Package 3, which saw researchers studying flood risk governance in the Netherlands, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Poland and Sweden based on three case study areas in each country. A thorough analysis has been performed and, although the respective reports won't be finalised until the end of September 2015, some interesting facts have already emerged from making comparisons between the countries, a process which will be at the heart of Work Package 4.

One issue that emerged was that, while the countries studied by STAR-FLOOD all seem to have been making efforts to diversify, link together and align Flood Risk Management Strategies, this has proved to be challenging. 'In many cases, change towards more diversified Flood Risk Management was found to be caused by the actions of change agents throwing their weight behind new developments or by shock events (e.g. floods),' the team explains on the project website. On the other hand, they also point to national flood policies and regulations in the United Kingdom which 'were found to have a certain degree of in-built flexibility leading to gradual changes in flood risk governance.'

In all countries government actions for dealing with flood risks were found to be complemented by specific local actions performed by local authority actors but also by business, civil society actors and sometimes residents themselves. For the STAR-FLOOD team, this raises the fundamental question of how such initiatives can best be facilitated, and this is an issue which they will delve into over the next months.

Finally, the project notes differences in the implementation of the Floods Directive. 'While all STAR-FLOOD countries are EU Member States in the process of implementing the EU Floods Directive

(Directive 2007/60/EC), the relative influence attributed to the Floods Directive differs tremendously between the STAR-FLOOD countries. In Poland, for instance, there is some evidence that the Floods Directive implementation legitimised innovative policies and legislations. In the Netherlands, on the other hand, although some policymakers welcome the flood hazard and flood risk maps, in general the Floods Directive implementation is viewed as a bureaucratic exercise: it is more seen as a formalisation of 'business as usual' than as an opportunity to improve [flood risk](#) governance,' the team explains.

The country analysis follows the completion of the project's Work Package 2 in November 2013, in which researchers had developed an assessment framework to perform the country and case study analyses. The project is set to end on 31 March 2016 with the release of design principles for appropriate and resilient Flood Risk Governance Arrangements (FRGAs).

More information: For more information, please visit STAR-FLOOD: www.starflood.eu/

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