Flood Risk Management Strategies: A comparative analysis of different EU countries

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Flood risk management continues to grow in importance with the potential increase in the frequency and intensity of hydro-meteorological hazards. Such events require effective and evidence-informed policy to set a foundation for sound management strategies and ultimately toward building resilient societies. Resilience in the context of this research refers to the ability of a given system or region to absorb a hazard-induced shock and follows closely to the definition applied by the IMRA project (Integrative flood risk governance approach for improvement of risk awareness and increased public participation). In consequence, this research pays particular attention to policy which contains methods for risk communication and awareness, principally that which emphasizes general public and community level involvement as specified by both the EU Water Framework Directive and the EU Floods Directive.

Within this research, flood risk management policies in selected case study areas are analyzed with respect to climate scenario outputs from the ESPON 2013 Programme (the European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion). Case study sites are chosen to complement the current research of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network, CHANGES (Changing Hydro-meteorological Hazards as Analyzed by a New Generation of European Scientists). The sites consist of the Ubaye and Tinée Valleys in France, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia in Italy, the Wieprzówka catchment in Poland and Buzău County in Romania. These particular sites are chosen as they are highly relevant with regard to current development in flood risk management strategies, they demonstrate a sampling of different risk cultures, and they allow for representation of policy in both Eastern and Western European countries.

Case study analysis ascertains and elaborates on whether there are mismatches or notable improvements toward fitting current flood risk management strategies to the projected flood risk trends. This enables an interdisciplinary per case study site, or individual, analysis. A comparative component is also provided as a result of determination of recommendations revealed through analysis across the chosen sites. Particular attention is paid to implementation of the aforementioned EU Floods Directive within current and developing policy. The end product and primary objective of this research fills a literary gap through provision of a comprehensive compilation of the insight gleaned from comparison of flood risk management strategies in different EU countries. This means to further contribute to the on-going dialogue of harmonization of EU flood risk management strategies.