

Title: Flood and geomorphological risk alleviation measures and River Restoration – A good and effective duo?

Duration of workshop: approximately 3 hours

Number of participants: max. 30

Expected outcome: This workshop would like to give a contribution towards a more widespread and effective integration of river restoration into river basin planning and management measures for flood and geomorphological risk¹ control. As a result of the discussion, we would like to highlight what are the positive aspects and successful experiences of this integration and what are the difficulties and main challenges still to be solved when trying to combine river restoration and risk alleviation measures, implementing a “more room to the river approach”.

We would like to investigate whether and to what extent this integrated approach could achieve the objectives of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) and the Floods Directive (2007/60/EC) and what tools are available to implement it, highlighting differences and specificities depending on the type of risk and on the national and geographical context.

The final output will be a shared document, representing a first draft -to be revised and further developed after the Conference- of policy suggestions to be sent by the ECRR to the Commissioner of the DG Environment Stavros Dimas, to Directorate D “Water, Chemicals & Cohesion”, to the Article 21 Committee of the WFD, to Water Directors.

Background:

Between 1998 and 2004, Europe suffered over 100 major damaging floods, including the catastrophic ones along the Danube and Elbe rivers in summer 2002. Severe floods in 2005 further reinforced the need for concerted action. Since 1998 floods in Europe have caused some 700 deaths, the displacement of about half a million people and at least €25 billion in insured economic losses. In addition to economic and social damage, floods can have severe direct environmental consequences, for example when installations holding large quantities of toxic chemicals are inundated.

At the same time, especially in Mediterranean rivers, damages related to river geomorphological processes, both natural and induced by morphological alterations (e.g.: gravel abstraction and interruption of sediment transport inducing deep riverbed incision) are a major concern. Together with floods they are on the one side a cause of heavy economic losses, on the other of severe impacts on river ecosystems, due to the traditional approach of risk control through defence works and “hard” engineering interventions. This approach has clearly shown its limits, both under ecological and economical points of view, and climate change adds to the urgent need of different solutions.

Some significant experiences have been carried out, integrating river restoration and risk alleviation, adopting what was labelled as the “more room for the river” approach. Nevertheless, this is still far from an ordinary approach in basin planning and management. A clearer assessment of its benefits, further dissemination of knowledge and best practices and also the development of new tools and methods to overcome critical implementation problems are needed..

This appears to be strategic for river restoration in Europe, since, despite WFD requirements, “stand alone” restoration/rehabilitation projects are very rarely financed, while most funds are allocated to risk alleviation measures. This is especially true in case of densely populated river catchments where the implementation of river restoration measures for flood and hydromorphological risk alleviation is probably the only way of attaining a better ecological status of water bodies.

¹ We indicate with this term the risk related to morphological evolution of riverbeds and its geomorphological dynamics in general, e.g.: the risk of erosion of private land in floodplains due to lateral movements of river bankfull.

Structure of the workshop:

The workshop will be divided in 4 steps:

- 1) Introduction
- 2) SWOT analysis
- 3) SWOT sum up (in the meantime coffee break and informal presentations of case studies)
- 4) From SWOT to strategies

Step 1

Title: Introduction

Duration: 30'

Expected output: theme introduction, clarification of the workshop work programme and collaborative atmosphere.

Description:

The first part of the workshop will be devoted to an introduction of the theme “river restoration and flood/geomorphological risk management”. Main issues and some examples will be concisely illustrated, also taking into account discussion and results of the preliminary Italian-Spanish workshop on the same subject carried out in June 2007².

The step will finish with a quick presentation of the participants, asking also what is their role and background in relation to the targeted theme and their main expectations from the workshop. This part would lead to a collaborative atmosphere and also would give an idea of participants' profiles.

Step 2

Title: SWOT analysis

Duration: 60'

Expected output: SWOT brainstorming

Description: The participants will be divided by the facilitators in 4 small groups in order to foster the expression of ideas and opinions by all. Ideally there will be cross-functional teams that represent a broad range of perspectives (e.g.: biologists, engineers, planners, public managers, politicians, farmers). The 4 groups will be sitting around a table together with a facilitator and a reporter in charge to write down the minutes. Every table will represent one (or two) aspect(s) of the SWOT analysis (Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat) and every working group should work separately on a specific part of the SWOT analysis for 15 minutes. The facilitator will lead the discussion and the reporter will write the key outcome of the analysis. At the end of the 15 minutes the groups will be swapping to a different table i.e. to a different SWOT component. The facilitator

² “River restoration as a tool for flood and hydromorphological risk management and to reach good ecological status: new criteria in river works and Mediterranean policies”, Italian-Spanish seminar, 14 June 2007, Parma, Italy. Organized by CIRF, ECRR, Gruppo 183, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, and supported by Regione Emilia Romagna, Po Basin Authority, the Italian and Spanish Ministry of the Environment, Banca Monte Parma. Main issues discussed were the following:

- are “ex ante” evaluation procedures, to decide whether and how to carry out interventions -cost-benefit analyses, EIA, SEA- adequate and correctly applied? Are significant examples available showing clear benefits?
- What kind of tools and best practices are available for urban contexts?
- How can large scale river restoration interventions for risk alleviation be funded? Are appropriate basin scale financial compensation instruments available? How can river floodplain and mobility corridor be managed without expropriation?
- Are appropriate financial measures included in the new Common Agricultural Policy? What instruments are available for flood risk and which for geomorphological risk reduction?
- Are EU and national legislation appropriate to foster the integrated approach proposed, or they need to be modified? Are the rules regulating the river public domain coherent with idea of “giving more space to the river”, or still oriented to favour more “productive” uses of these areas?

and the reporter will remain seated at the same table in order to collect the results of the discussion by the 4 groups on the identical issue.

Step 3

Title: SWOT sum up

Duration: 30'

Expected output: SWOT summary slides

Description: The facilitators together with the reporter will summarize the results of the SWOT analysis. The objective is to identify the most important and significant issues emerged by the discussion with the 4 groups. This will be done preparing a slide with a bullet point list for each aspect of the SWOT.

In the meantime the participants will have a coffee break, share experiences and impressions and listen to informal presentations of significant case studies. **Potential participants are strongly invited to send from now on to the organizing group documents, slides, comments which they consider pertinent and useful to support the discussion.**

Step 4

Title: From SWOT to strategies

Duration: 60'

Expected output:

Description: There will be a presentation of the 4 slides of the main topics of the SWOT analysis in order to reach a common agreement. After that the SWOT will be used as input to the creative generation of possible strategies, by asking and answering each of the following four questions:

- How can we use each strength?
- How can we overcome each weakness?
- How can we exploit each opportunity?
- How can we defend against each threat?

The debate will be open but moderated by the facilitators, in order to keep the discussion on topic. For each question, in fact, only 10-15 minutes will be available. The facilitators will draw up the conclusions for common understanding and agreement.

After the workshop

One of the facilitators will write down a short report including the workshop structure, results and conclusion. The first draft will be shared among the team of facilitators and the second with all workshop participants. The final version is expected to be a policy document to be sent by the ECRR to identified authorities as stated in the “expected outcome” paragraph.

Organizing group: Petér Bakonyi (HU), Andrea Goltara (CIRF - IT), Diego García de Jalón (ES), Ute Menke (NL), Henk Nijland (NL), Paolo Negri (WWF Italy).