

## Mainz Declaration

Water is known as source of life or 'sine qua non'. Water is the vital prerequisite of our whole natural environment and for all our socio-economic developments. Floods and droughts emphasise the strong political dimension of water management issues.

The disastrous flood events in Europe of the last years have anew shown the relevance of early warning systems and stressed again the relevance of holistic and basin wide strategies for flood alleviation and protection. Political action in the field of flood management must be combined with serious efforts in climate protection on all levels as flood risks, probabilities and extreme events will increase in frequency and magnitude. Political action must be accompanied by public participation and the acceptance of flood alleviation measures, not only focussed on technical measures but following the motto 'Space for the River'.

As water does not respect national boundaries it is essential to consider the entire catchment through effective cross-border cooperation. Similarly the wide range of impacts requires a cross-sectoral approach to achieve maximum security for those who are exposed to the dangers of flood events. This takes into account honesty and transparency towards our citizens, farmers, the industrial companies, authorities communities and other actors who need planning security.

Why do we need transnational cooperation?

- INTERREG projects act as important catalysts for tackling flood issues and strengthening innovative, integrated strategies.
- European Funds can thus be seen as 'seed money' to promote innovative steps and speed up the process of implementation.
- To involve more partners from different regions adds extra value to output of the projects.
- It leads to cost efficiency within the projects and results may be transferred to other countries/river catchments.
- Integration of the new member states of the EU will be facilitated.
- Creating solidarity along the river and recognising the over all responsibility as every action is part of the whole.

The catchment-based approach for an integrated water management – implemented in the INTERREG programmes since 1997 – has already been proved successful in its application in the work of the international river commissions and the predetermined cooperation at catchment level in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. Efforts on management of flood risks will be further supported by the ongoing EU Flood Action Programme for which an appropriate legal tool will be proposed soon by the EC.

The relevance of the political aims of the European Union, which hold protection against natural hazards as one of the key priorities of the Gothenburg strategy, also need to be reflected in an appropriately funded and conceived programme based on specific key priorities of the European funding policy: the overall cohesion policy with a focus on transnational cooperation, the programmes on rural development, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and research policy.

Therefore the “Mainz Declaration” calls on those, who lead our countries (politicians, policy makers and administrators) to take a long term view and set the topics of quantitative and qualitative aspects of water management at the top of their agenda. This includes:

- the appropriate provision of European funding for transnational cooperation, including funding of investments and corresponding national co-financing;
- working to ensure that the results of different directives are compatible with good water management policies;
- a high priority for water management issues in the ERDF and related programmes such as Rural Development;
- supporting these initiatives with the necessary staffing and resources within the member states, river commissions and in the EC;
- promoting continuity in the existing fruitful transnational cooperative partnerships and networks.

The outcome of the conference of Mainz, held in an international setting, has started to show that valuable results can be achieved with transnational water projects funded by the EU. Recognising that changes in management practice and public perception are long-term issues we need continuity of support beyond 2006 in order to consolidate these achievements and secure long-term benefits.

Mainz, October 2005