

Governance workshop during floods

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Workshop summary

The climate is changing, we can expect more extreme weather events. EU CAS encourages us to work together across borders. In this workshop we zoomed in on cross-border governance with the case study of last summer's floods. The floods caused by heavy rainfall show the importance of cross-border cooperation. In this workshop we would like to hear from you which governance practices were successful in dealing with these floods: which partnerships, which projects, which area-based processes, which knowledge platforms? And how can we expand these successful practices for cross-border cooperation in dealing with floods? In two workshops of each two hours we have explored these questions and have come to the following five action points

Top 5 Actions resulting from the workshop

1. We need both the software and the hardware in governance practices, and the middleware to connect the two. (hardware being the results based and data, software being the culture and middleware the people.)
2. Inspirational talks on cooperation in the Meuse + Thematic life networking events
3. Cross-border high-water prediction system in place
4. Interreg projects as accelerator for joint interests and cross-border financing
5. practical training on disasters to improve cooperation

Workshop report in detail

Program

1. Collect successful practises – interactive group task
2. Reflection – plenary
3. If we have time: Identify barriers to expand succesful practices
4. Reflection from ambassadors
5. End 12:30
6. Afternoon workshop: Expand successful practices

Intro Jessica de Boer en Henk Smit

Normally we humans tend to focus on what went wrong, this is a bias that stems from our hunter gatherer past, nowadays it is often not useful anymore that is why we explored what went well during the floods, what was the result? And what was the underlying structure, knowledge experience, shared sense of urgency that made it possible? We placed this information on the diagram below.



Collect succesful practises (ambassadors)

Lia Roefs (Board member of province Limburg, NL)

Lia Roefs had a talk with Walloon minister Céline Tellier (Minister of the Environment, Nature, Forestry, Rurality en Animal Welfare – Government of Wallonia, BE) about water quality. Next she is going to talk to Rijkswaterstaat (Dutch national government agency on public infrastructure. She is working with Belgium to build a strategy to have more contact on the floor. “What can we do together”. For example, measurements and evaluations can be shared. GO together. All the countries have the same measures. Something that was difficult that is already on its way.

Kees de Jong (board member of waterboard Brabantse Delta)

We managed the problems during the floods. Now we are talking about water quality standards. Also Belgium is working on this, but we are not working on the same standards. We are now having close contacts. This is a good thing. We heard from Ria that maybe investments over the border are sometimes more cost-effective ways to solve a problem. We are now exploring this for the drought problem. In Antwerp we found knowledge we didn't expect to find there.

Ida Adema (Kings commissioner of province Noord Brabant, NL)

We are talking about the flood issue. Formerly she was involved with the space for the river program. During the program they knew that Germany and Belgium where really important but there was little collaboration. You should make a deal on a national level, and then work it out on the international level. In the end a step like that is necessary.



Succes stories of the participants

1. Succes story interreg project aquadra. This project had several cross-border measures. There is mutual financing (EU and the countries). Practically there was a water retention area and a water retention buffer.
2. During floods informal international contacts german waterboard and dutch Limburg waterboard quick and effective working together. The reason for this was the absence of structure!
3. Generally, the interreg program is a structure that we are very happy with. There is money and partners from the beginning that confirm with the interreg. This way you can trust on their commitment.
4. During a flood it is very important to exchange data of e.g. precipitation, flow and river levels. The International Meuse Commission (IMC) facilitates data exchange. This is a formalised cooperation helped (goes automatically)

Question: *One of the problems was too few information exchange. What was not exchanged? Example there were problems in Warsage this had a potential impact downstream. In the future we would also like to get that information. This exchange was not in the agreement. Also there is a language barrier and everyone is busy during a flood.*

Answer: *There is now a pilot phase the Hague (where also this operational information gets transferred into the automatic data sharing.) Now a taskforce is being Established working together on international cooperation. Example in the Vechtstromen (good cooperation). However still more is needed. We do for example Cross border stress test in regional water systems (Geul en Vecht). We will do Cross border rapid assessment. We will start this in the Geul. Cross border high water flood predictions. Also Nort Rhein Westfalen is working on this in their region.*

Question: *What would be the main factor for improvement?*

Answer: *We have very good river commissions. We now want to expand this for the regional water systems. We see a lot of enthusiasm, however Wallonia is still a challenge.*

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5. Another success story is our crisis management. We have cross border cooperation.
 6. In 2011 a risk assessment was executed with Kleve, Waterboard Rijn and Ijssel and Rijkswaterstaat. This showed the different mentalities between the Dutch and German water professionals which gave difficulties during the execution of the exercises.
 7. A big success story that is mentioned again now in the context of low water levels. Is that you can see the water level in the whole basin; there is automated data provisioning and sharing

Wrap up: Formal network (IMC) and the informal networks are two sides of the same coin.



Which of these practices would you like to expand?

1. More informal contact is needed so that you already know each other before something happens. We are now trying to scale having informal meetings at different levels. An example of this is MICCA. We try to implement informal meetings on climate adaptation in the Meuse basin. (various thematic networks)
2. What I would like to see is that we make contact with the total community (who are responsible for different projects), to broaden the discussion, it is often a space issue. I don't think we need Lasagna (stacking of functions) in the Meuse Region; I would like to see other solutions.
3. I would like us to work even more together on a practical, operational level. (operationalise to the bottom) Also with concrete rules.

Question:

Jean Noel; what do you see that needs to happen more?

Answer:

We are not working all at the same level, with the same resources. This is also very difficult. Upstream there are little resources; downstream there are more resources but also more problems. The solution is international financing. An example of where we did this was in the Grensmaas. The Netherlands sent money to Belgium for levies. What is needed for this is political will and agreement. Our taxes will have to go to another country. We need to define problems and solutions for international project areas. It has also been done in the rhine river. There is a budget of 200 million EUR across the Rhine.

Results





SuccessFactors

- International financing (Interreg)
- Informal networks
- Automatic data sharing!
- Highlight: (Kees de jong) continue this next to the IMC.
 - We see things that are already done.
 - A lot of things that are already going.
 - Doing the right things with the right finance ways.

Afternoon session:

Patrick van den Broeck (Chairman of waterboard Limburg, NL)

A lack of international coordination during the flood lead to intensification of the flood near Roermond. Under the motto “never waste a good crisis” this lead to the Interreg proposal on quick info exchange on civil service level. Where Models from Limburg and Data measurements from Germany got shared. What I would like is a EU regional telephone number list of all the water civil servants. We want to expand the current cooperation towards a next step.

Bernard de Potter (Flemish Mileumaatschappij, BE)

To cope with global climate change it is important to monitor the quality and quantity of surface water continuously. The Flemish Environment Agency is building a dense monitoring network of high-tech sensors to create a smart network with warning and alarming systems. In cooperation with research organisations, waste water and drinking water companies the project ‘Internet of Water Flanders’ is set up to facilitate a more dynamic and efficient water management and pave the way to a more robust water system. This is a step towards adapting our common practices to adjustable methods to take climate change into account.

In response to the floods in July 2021 a multidisciplinary expert panel (of academics, policymakers, experts in hydrology and hydraulics, architects, spatial planners and climate experts) was established to investigate how the Flemish Region can protect itself better against a so-called water bomb, an exceptional amount of rain in a short time span. The chairman of the Coordination Committee on Integrated Water Policy sits also on the panel. The panel is asked to formulate recommendations and actions for the Flemish Government to drastically increase water safety in Flanders.

Experiences to expand (outcomes of cross border conversations)

- Training the crisis. We do regular cross border exercises for grenswateren (shared rivers) Days in which you work through a scenario, that way you find out what is not there.
- We met each other through the crisis. Brown coal mining in Germany. The Dutch were afraid for pollution (cobalt and heavy metals) Apparently the Dutch have different norms and different practices. In Germany Cobalt is not on the list of substances which need regulation. The waterboards acted as an intermediate. We noticed there is something like the Netherlands and



they have needs that we don't see (e.g. cobalt, they are not there in Germany) In the Netherlands they were very concerned.

- In the past Dutch waterboard officials found it difficult to get data on time from the French and Wallonian. After a talk the French and the Wallonians just want to share data that are checked, and that takes time. If you want to know who is doing what in the Meuse basin there are nice maps downstairs (MICCA).
- In the Meuse river during the floods there was a lot of help from colleagues from different waterboards but also from civilians. Civilians helped as well with carrying sandbags. Different water authorities came to help. What we learned from this is that a lot of people are willing to help. So more information should be spread to civilians. To encourage solidarity.
- I propose we work on a project base based on coalitions of the willing. Let's work with a functional coalition.

Question: *Jean Noel; what do you see that needs to happen more?*

Answer: *We are not working all at the same level, with the same resources. This is also very difficult. Upstream there are little resources; downstream there are more resources but also more problems. The solution is international financing. An example of where we did this was in the Grensmaas. The Netherlands sent money to Belgium for levies. What is needed for this is political will and agreement. Our taxes will have to go to another country. We need to define problems and solutions for international project areas. It has also been done in the rhine river. There is a budget of 200 million EUR across the rhine.*

Question: *"What made you being interested in water leaving your country? What is your interest?"*

Answer: *We are concerned about our vocation. We also want to test out our tools.*

- Another practice I would like to expand is the datasharing. It also needs to be shared in the same format. (inpire, OSLO standards) A lot of data is coming from metereological context, should be translated to hydrological standard.

MICCA: *MICCA is an international network with a focus on climate change adaptation, to have a common understanding of what should be done in the basin. We have a catalogue of measures.*

How to move forward?

- Cross border financing; Money is top priority, we all follow the money.
- (Bernard de Potter, Flemish Mileumaatschappij) Monthly inspirational talks foster relationships. Our organisation has more than 800 people. We don't know what everyone is doing. A solution we have implemented is to have an inspirational talk every month. Every third Tuesday there is a talk about some form of collaboration. It is very important and valuable to talk about different



topics on different ways. Money is important but without relationships nothing works. To foster relationships, you need a theme to talk about and a common interest.

- Patrick van den Broeck: One important thing would be a Cross border prediction system. To share insights on how to store water, how to gain a better water quality.
 - a. How can you gain a better water quality.
 - b. Governing a water common
 - c. What would be a desirable
 - i. When you get 90% financed by the EU.
 - ii. The only thing which rests is the collaboration (going and setting together)
 - 1. I don't see any problems.
 - iii. How to arrange this legally
- Also we need more spatially dense modelling. This costs more, more measurements. (once a week or once a month someone needs to go and see if the sensor is still working) (internet of things measurements). We are here experiencing a diminishing of our staff due to federal budget cuts. Decreasing the people is an ideological political choice. We are obliged to our inhabitants to create solutions. We have to see the solutions basin wide. And we are willing to invest cross border.
- We need to find a balance between hardware and software. The middleware is people.

Top 6 Lessons learned:

- Exchange of data and faster validation
- Cross-border financing
- Language barriers to overcome, contact directories to be up-to-date
- Civilians involvement
- Emergency trainings, transboundary flood exercises, field trips
- Cross-border crisis management plans