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Adaptation strategies can offset rising river flood risk in Europe

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River flooding is the costliest natural disaster in Europe. Global warming and continued development in flood prone areas will progressively increase river flood risk. Direct damages from flooding could become six times present losses by the end of the century in case of no climate mitigation and adaptation. Keeping global warming well below 2°C would halve these impacts. Adequate adaptation strategies can further substantially reduce future flood impacts. In particular, implementing building-based damage reduction measures and reducing flood peaks using retention areas can lower impacts in a cost-efficient way in most EU countries, even to flood risk levels that are lower than today. Restoring natural wetlands and floodplains to retain excess water also improves the state of water and ecosystems.