



Role of National platforms for Disaster Risk Reduction for Storm Surge Risk Management: supporting participation of civil society and scientific communities

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Local communities are requested to develop DRR plans, which are meant to limit vulnerability on the long term, while influencing directly on planning and urbanism. In addition, emergency preparedness plans and exercises for civil security and community protection are meant to develop and maintain an optimal level of preparedness. Finally, when damages are observed following a catastrophic event, insurance is provided with a solidarity principle, managed by insurance companies on behalf of the State.

Development of storm surge prevention and preparedness plans are late compared to other hazards: only 49 communities out of 864 at-risk of storm surge have approved a binding DRR plan (71 have been stipulated by the national government).

This gap has to be filled in a rapidly evolving DRR context in France: the European flood Directive calls for enhanced coordination among planning documents developed at the level of administrative units, and risk planning documents developed in "risk basins". The National Platform is currently developing proposals for a reform of local DRR planning procedures, upon request from the Government. A reform of local authorities' statutes and competences is also underway. The "Sea Grenelle" (also addressing coastal areas), completed recently, has also provided a number of recommendations. In addition, a long-term plan for the territories by 2040 is under development.

The French Vigilance system was developed in 2001, with the goal to respond to needs expressed by the civil security and the public following important weather events such as Lothar and Martin storms in 1999. The result, undergoing continuous improvement since its launch, is now providing public authoritative forecast information and guidance for preparedness in relation with strong wind, thunderstorm, rainfall and related flooding, snow and ice, cold and heat waves. Wild land fire risk is also being monitored (not public). An additional module of the Vigilance system for storm surge, under development for several years, should become operational by the end of 2010, with the goal to provide differentiated preparedness advices for "storm" and "storm surge" according to local vulnerabilities.

The national platform for disaster risk reduction (Orientation Council for Major Natural Disaster Reduction, COPRNM) is guiding development and adaptation of public policies for planning, prevention and adaptation. The platform operates in close linkage with a network of partners (in particular those of AFPCN), so as to reflect needs and capacities available through civil society and scientific and technical communities.

Following the landfall of Xynthia in Vendée, an interdepartmental return on experience exercise is being conducted, to be finalised during summer. It will provide recommendations related to planning and prevention (including compulsory purchase of some plots at-risk) and development of early warning tools. These recommendations will be very specific, adapted to a context of high pressure on land and tourism. A synthesis of the lessons learned would be presented during this session.