



EUREAU



European Union of National Associations of
Water Suppliers and Waste Water Services

Union Européenne des Associations
Nationales de Distributeurs d'Eau et de
Services d'Assainissement

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Eureau position on the European Floods Directive

Summary

Eureau welcomes the directive on the assessment and management of floods but calls for better co-ordination with land use planners, particularly in urban areas, to reduce the risk of surface water flooding where drainage systems are overwhelmed.

EUREAU is the European federation of national associations of water suppliers and waste water services. Our members collectively provide sustainable water services to around 405 million European citizens. They reflect the full diversity of the European water services sector and represent both public and private operators. As the focus of a European network, Eureau represents a unique concentration of technical, scientific and managerial knowledge and practical experience in water services.

EUREAU's members own and operate surface water drainage systems, some of which are combined with foul water drainage systems. These systems are generally designed to drain areas of wastewater and stormwater, up to the limit of the design return period, established according to the risk level assumed. This return period is smaller in urban drainage systems than in river catchments, because of the higher damages that river flooding may cause in comparison with sewer flooding.

Historically our members have had little influence on land use in the catchment areas. This lack of control means that following periods of heavy rainfall, systems may be overwhelmed and result in flooding which may be very distressing for citizens.



Thus EUREAU welcomes the directive on the assessment and management of floods and would like to draw the attention of Member States to the following key points which we would like to be considered in respect of transposition of the Directive into National Legislation.

Alignment with the Water Framework Directive: EUREAU welcomes the alignment of proposed flood risk management plans with river basin management plans. Eureau believes that to a large extent the two are interdependent and that it is important to view flood risk management in holistic terms.

EUREAU wishes to draw attention to the important link between catchment flood management, including land use and flood prevention, and urban/sewer flooding. Urban/sewer flooding is probably the most economically damaging as well as the most distressing for our citizens. It is important that river basin management, flood risk planning and town planning considers this. Programmes of measures could include reduction of impermeable areas, reinstatement of natural flood plains and river courses and implementation of a system of sustainable flood management to protect urban drainage systems.

Flood risk plans: In EUREAU's view it is more important that flood risk plans highlight the importance of a good coordination between land use planners, river managers and urban drainage planners than focus on any risk that the urban drainage system may not cope. In order to limit any administrative burden on water services EUREAU supports the wording of the directive that it 'may exclude floods from sewerage systems.' In this context we would expect that both combined and separate systems are considered to be sewerage systems..

Climate Change: There is much evidence that climate change is resulting in more frequent and more intense rainfall events, meaning that existing urban drainage systems are more frequently unable to cope. These events are made worse by large areas of impermeable surface which direct more rainwater to the drainage systems.

Sustainable drainage: EUREAU supports the promotion of sustainable drainage systems to reduce or attenuate discharges to piped sewerage and drainage systems. Such schemes must be considered as part of any development planning process. It must be recognised that they are not always a solution to flooding problems but have added benefits in reducing diffuse pollution and providing new habitats.