

HELP-GWP consultation in CEE on Draft Principles on Investment and Financing for Water related Disaster Risk Reduction

Consultation Report

Date:	9 October 2018
Place:	Bucharest, Romania
Number of participants:	36 from 10 countries

Background

Organised upon the request of the High-level Experts and Leaders Panel on Water and Disaster (HELP), the main focus of the consultation was to collect comments on the proposed Principles on Investments and Financing for water related disaster risk reduction and gain understanding of the regional perception of the effective disaster response. Consultations were organized back-to-back with the [Drought Risk in the Danube Region](#) (DriDanube) project meeting. Initiative is closely related to this project, aiming to help all stakeholders involved in drought management become more efficient during drought emergency response and prepare better for the next drought.

Objectives

- to collect comments on the proposed Principles on Investments and Financing for water related disaster risk reduction
- to discuss Principles and their operational value
- to formulate the Implementation Plan of the Principles

Short Summary

Consultation was opened by Elena Mateescu, director of National Meteorological Administration, Romania, where the consultation was held. She pointed out that Disaster Risk Reduction is important topic for them and they want to emphasize it also in their next year 6 months EU presidency. After her, Danka Thalmeinerova (interim GWP CEE Regional Coordinator) welcomed the participants, presented in short GWP CEE and emphasized that HELP principles are highly relevant for a follow up of GWP CEE 5 years programme on IDMP and all of the spin-off projects in CEE (and outreach to several other GWP partners in Caucasus and Balkan regions).

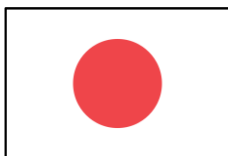
Andreja Susnik (coordinator of the DriDanube project from Slovenian Environmental Agency) said that the principles are in line with the overall objectives of the DriDanube project. Especially with the DriDanube Strategy which will give clear guidance for overcoming the gaps in decision-making processes in drought management.

HELP representatives welcomed the participants as well and explain a bit of a background of the consultation and principles themselves.

Majority of the participants was coming from the DriDanube partnership (Danube region countries); other participants were disaster risk experts from Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, Armenia and Romania.

In the second half of the consultation, all participants were divided into 4 smaller groups with facilitator and reporter and discussed:

- Principles and its operationalization
- citizens' perception about recovery from mega-disasters.



It was pointed out by HELP facilitators that they are not seeking official endorsement from the UN. Their intention is to see these principles to be used in the country; they are seeking the ownership of the principles at the national level.

Discussion (summary of the group discussions)

Discussion 1: On Principles and its operationalization

Application of the Principles in the region:

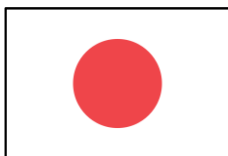
- Significant improvement at policy level in the CEE region – national strategies for adaptation to CC were adopted or being developed; consequently, the governments are adjusting direction in investments. In addition, CC Adaptation strategies allow more CC adaptation targeted instruments, projects, initiatives to cope with disasters.
- Croatia - they have mentioned national risk assessment for natural disasters that were prepared in period 2015-2018. Also, less successful attempt of drought insurance was mentioned.
- Bosnia (Republic of Srpska) - key element was "big flood" event in 2014 which is still remembered. Although early warning was successful, disaster management was not appropriate. Since then, it has improved in many aspects.
- Slovenia - also floods in 2010 and 2014 (although not in same scale as in Bosnia) helped in raising awareness. This is the case also for droughts (last one was in 2017). Financing the infrastructure is public, although some programmes (e.g. cofinancing of irrigation systems by EU funds) require private contribution. Drought is currently still managed mainly in reactive manner.
- Georgia and Hungary - both countries are also exposed to many natural disasters, such as heavy rain, heat waves, flash floods as well as landslides and snow avalanches.

General comments on Principles:

- Draft principles are written in "water terminology/language. However, principles call for actions in other sectors as well (agriculture, urban, energy etc.); suggestion is to try go beyond water sector and invite other key stakeholders to consult on principles as well. In addition, the ownership and understanding should be received at the level of the government.
- Structuring of the Principles into pillars is good; however, it should be considered that 20 principles are too many to receive the support.
- There should be more references to global documents/initiatives, etc. With this, respective countries will easier to incorporate principle into their existing policies/strategies.
- At the beginning, to include some numerical facts such as we can find it on slide "Effect of Preventive Measures" in accompanied PPT.
- Also, to emphasize "why are we doing this?" - we are using shift from disaster management to risk management.

Wording of the Principles:

- Wording of some principles allow various interpretation; they should be simpler (examples are: pillar IV "various funding" – what does it mean; principle 6 "Built back better" – avoid using slogans and provide definition; principle 7 is the statement rather than principle, etc.). If explanation is needed it could be supported by explanatory paragraphs.
- Initial statement "ratio 10:90%" - it is not clear if this ration is supported by data or by intuition.
- "Doubled the investments" – it is not clear, why doubled? Maybe is better to use "significant increase".



Financing needed for application of the Principles:

- To include also soft Investment in education, capacity building, etc.
- Common investments need to be specified: structural (infrastructure), non-structural.
- International financing: in this region, main international financing institution is EU. EU mechanisms, those that are well in place, are still too reactive and focus on recovery. But there are funds available for co-financing infrastructure, however always national and/or private contribution is required. Due to this requirement and complex administration, sometimes not all available funds are consumed.
- Investments in R&D are beneficial for reducing exposure.
- Involvement of private funding is not common for this region; governments are expected to cover, especially big infrastructures.

Comments on Specific principles:

- Principle 14: Comprehensive and adequately enforced legislation needs to guide private sector investment towards reducing rather than increasing risk.
- Principle 15: “Incentives for awareness raising and self-prevention measures by the private sector should be explored.” We suggest erasing the second part of the sentence: “Subsidies and tax exemptions should not be misused in terms of self-prevention measures”.
- Principle 16: Water-related disaster insurance (floods and droughts) can play a role in encouraging countries to reshape the way risks are managed. Insurance is effective to speed up recovery but does not reduce the disaster risks.
- One of the most important principle recognized by the participants was principle no. 2. It is recommended to insert the statement “measures implemented to avoid disasters are not cost but an investment for the development of the future”.
- Pillar 5: International assistance; why not to add national assistance?
- Pillar 4; Principle 16 – different understanding on insurance

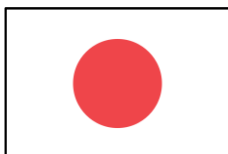
Discussion 2: On citizens’ perception about recovery from mega-disasters (on effective disaster response)

Governance:

- Prioritization of proactive DRR approach should not always come from the governments; change can happen also in case when the “drive” come from the society.
- Authorities and public have tendency to act after the disaster; the governments usually find money that were not available for investment when the catastrophe happens.
- National political leaders in the region have prime responsibility for disaster management, however this responsibility is not exclusive; the whole chain of responsibility has to be ensured.
- Governments are not evaluated towards their action for DRR; it is very rare that political elites build their political campaigns to promise investments in DRR; usually popularity of the governments will be increased when funds for recovery are given.
- There is a need for clear responsibility/protocol at all 3 levels – political (government), legal (communities), social (individuals) – needed not only within a country but in case of big rivers also internationally, i.e. for Danube river from Germany to Romania as acts in one country affect other countries downstream.

Public:

- Public awareness is limited to recovery with no strategic thinking for DRR (short memory syndrome)



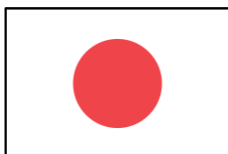
- Public does not link DRR with political programs (4 years cycles, other topics are usually more important)
- Most criticism is focused on slow recovery after initial shock of disaster.
- Ownership; it cannot be responsibility of the governments only, also the society needs to have a sense of ownership of the principles and the change that it is needed.
- SDG17 – it should be partnership; not to question who control who/what but more focus should be put on “creating partners” between governments and society (maybe to add additional principle, focusing on the partnership).
- Principles does not have reference to “public awareness”.
- Public is not informed properly on policies (policies are not known). It has happened that after expressed criticism during workshops, stakeholders were surprised what is already implemented. Information flow should be improved.
- "Build back better" principle is still not followed. After floods, recovery or reconstructions is usually done in crisis situation manner (very fast, using the material available at the time, ...). Examples after floods in Balkans in 2014 show that fast recovery was more important than quality and sustainability of reconstructed infrastructure.
- Better communication between authorities is needed.

Media:

- Media has strong power to influence the attitudes of the public. Rather than to document the scandals (catastrophe), media could play a role to explain the roots of the problem; in order to do so, media should be trained (capacity building).
- Disaster management cases usually act as good PR opportunity to raise support (main tools are photo sessions in flooded areas etc.). Positive campaigns do not attract attention; bad stories attract the public.
- Criticism of the media is quite common. Early warnings are never "early enough", although it is estimated by experts that early warning is now (especially in our region) very well developed.
- Most countries in EU use European “meteo alarm” in order to classify risk but meteo alarm is more for public while specific services would need tailored alarm protocols (more detailed areas, ranks, thresholds...). Related to that, media’s role in this can be crucial in terms of joining messages and making sure the right/joint one from national level goes out, instead of being used to spread individual messages of defence out to public.

Conclusions

- 1) The key message of the consultation was that the countermeasures implemented in advance against water related disasters are not a cost but an investment for the future.
- 2) Participants articulated good suggestions to tune the draft principles that are relevant not only for CEE but any other regions and global level.
- 3) Principles will not be officially endorsed by the UN; Principles need to be used in the countries. Role of GWP CEE and similar organizations is to disseminate the idea of the principles and seek the ownership at the country level.
- 4) To move from protection from disasters to disaster risk reduction because they are more effective; the “why” is still not clearly articulated in the principles so far.
- 5) To move from “seeking public support at the governmental level” towards the establishment of the “partnerships for DRR”.
- 6) Emphasis should not be only on investments; O&M (Operations & Maintenance) and soft investments should be an integral part of the principles on financing.



- 7) The draft principles are currently written in “water” language/terminology. However, the principles are addressed to many sectors, thus engagement of other sectors must be assured better to make the ownership. Also, the Climate Change community has to become more involved and have a say to in accepting the principles.
- 8) Although the principles are about the investments and financing, the key rationale behind the principles stay in the good governance.
- 9) Reference to SDG process should be present in the preamble of the principles.
- 10) The principles build on assumption of 90:10% investments ratio of recovery and DRR/preparedness. In order to have strong arguments, these numbers should be validated at national levels. There is a potential to develop a case study in CEE region to support such initiative.
- 11) The HELP principles are highly relevant for a follow up of GWP CEE 5 years programme on IDMP and all spin off projects in CEE (and outreach to several other GWP partners in Caucasus and Balkan regions).

Next steps

In discussions with Kenzo Hiroki and Tomo Okada, we also explored several opportunities on how to continue in our cooperation in more concrete format. GWP CEE region is a typical one where reactive measure to disasters significantly exceed proactive river basin planning that would lead to investments and financing – in terms of economic costs. Although the countries are advancing at “technical” actions/works in approaching DDR – early warning system, modelling and forecasting, as examples – there is far less attention to embed the proposed measures into government budgets and financial instruments.

In this regard, GWP CEE is ready for the follow up in any future cooperation with Japan; especially having in mind the following:

- there are good partners already engaged in GWP CEE activities focused on floods/drought (impact of CC)
- there are solid knowledge products and show cases on drought/flood management implementation
- most countries in CEE have adopted (or developed) CC Adaptation strategies.
- economic data on cost exist in CEE and could be analyzed to support the assumption of “High investments in recovery and low investments in risk reduction”

Dissemination/communication

Article on GWP CEE web page: <https://www.gwp.org/en/GWP-CEE/WE-ACT/news/2018/financing-disaster-risk-reduction-rather-than-floods-and-droughts-damages/>

Social media coverage:

- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049668140668473346>
- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049652305782611968>
- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049651370285039617>
- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049644788956483584>
- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049642750260449280>
- <https://twitter.com/GWPCEE/status/1049607259116982272>

**Completed Questionnaires on Principles shared with participants before the event were delivered to HELP coordinators the Consultations.*

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Date/Place: 23 October 2018/ Bratislava, Slovakia