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BMBF Research Activity 'Risk Management of Extreme Flood Events'

In January 2005 the national research program 'Risk management of extreme flood events', funded by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), has started. The program was initiated as consequence of the floods in August 2002 when intensive and lasting rainfall events hit Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the catchments of the river Elbe and the river Danube. In Germany, 21 people were killed and substantial parts of the infrastructure were destroyed. The total loss in Germany is estimated to be 12 billion €.

The damage due to the August 2002 floods by far exceeds the damage caused by other natural disasters in Germany during the last decades. These floods have dramatically called attention to limits and deficits of flood risk management in Germany. The aim of the research program is to develop and implement improved instruments of flood risk management by the integration of different disciplines and stakeholders. It focuses on flood events with a return period greater than 100 years and with high damage potential. The program consists of three major subjects: (1) integrated concepts of flood risk management, (2) technical flood defense and (3) cross-sectional tasks. The cross-sectional tasks should warrant knowledge transfer to practice and education as well as the national and Europe-wide networking of research activities. The research program emphasizes application and implementation, e.g. the projects have to collaborate with responsible organizations and authorities at different political levels.



Risk Management Cycle as Basis for a new Risk Culture

The BMBF research program may be seen as contribution to the lively and ongoing discussion concerning the management of natural risks in Germany. The traditional safety mentality or promise of security must be countered by a risk culture which is aware of the threads and which enables risks as well as preventive measures to be discussed and evaluated in an interdisciplinary dialogue.