



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

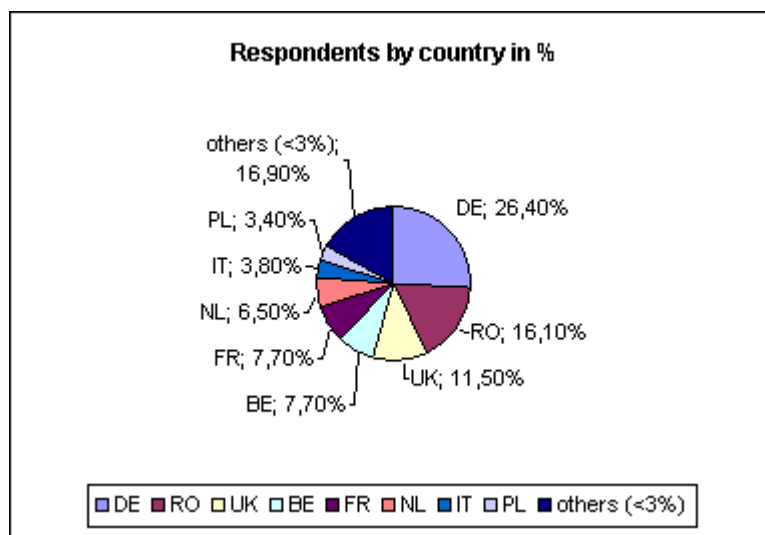
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL
ENVIRONMENT

Proposal for a Floods Directive
in the context of an EU Flood Action Programme

**Evaluation of the replies
to the Internet Consultation
“Reducing the risks of floods in Europe”**



1. Building upon the Commission Communication on ‘Flood risk management; flood prevention, protection and mitigation’ of 12 July 2004 (COM(2004)472), opinions and conclusions of Council, Committee of the Regions and Economic and Social Committee as well as the results of previous discussions with stakeholders, a final internet-based consultation took place from 20 July to 15 September 2005 to elicit relevant opinions from citizens and stakeholders on the Proposal for a Floods Directive as one of three distinct but closely interlinked components of a EU Floods action programme:
 - Research and information : improvement of the exchange of information and knowledge, sharing experiences and increasing awareness;
 - EU funding tools : targeted approach to the best use of funding tools;
 - A legal instrument: proposal for a Floods Directive.
2. During the eight weeks of the consultation, a total of 261 respondents replied to the questionnaire.
3. While the replies received originated from 33 different countries (amongst these all 25 EU Member States), more than half of the replies originated from residents of 3 countries – Germany, Romania and UK.



4. 40.2% of the replies originated from organisations and institutions (including Member States administrations), 59.8% responded as individuals. About 88.5% of replies originated from organisations or individuals not involved in the prior stages of consultation. As for the level of activities of organisations and companies, it is rather evenly distributed between local, regional, national and EU level.

5. The main conclusion that can be drawn from this consultation is that the approach proposed by the Commission was very broadly endorsed. The need for coordinated action along common principles was underscored by a large majority of respondents, whilst underlining the need for flexibility within river basins and sub-basins. More specifically, considerable majorities of between 67 and 96% agreed or largely agreed with the following approaches (in parenthesis for each item the percentage of “I agree” plus “I rather agree”):
 - scope of a directive to extend to all river basins/sub-basins/regions with a significant flood risk (77%);
 - level of protection to be set locally/regionally, at the same time ensuring coordination with neighbours upstream and downstream in shared river basins (91%);
 - flood mapping, i.e. knowing where the areas with flood risk are (95%);
 - flood risk management plans, i.e. a bundle of measures to reduce flood risk (97%);
 - cooperation in shared river basins not only mandatory between EU countries, but also to be endeavoured in river basins shared with non-EU countries (93%);
 - building on progress already achieved, in particular work within International River Commissions (83%);
 - link to water quality management within shared river basins under the Water Framework Directive, thus creating synergies and avoiding duplication (87%);
 - flexible time schedules to implement measures under a flood risk management plan elaborated (67%).

6. The questionnaire met the expectations of 65% of the respondents. The remaining 35% expected more details; of these, the majority used the option to send additional comments by mail or email.
7. Many respondents provided comments, both within the box of the questionnaire and by separate mail or email to the European Commission. Key statements of these comments were

On coherence with other policies, legislation and activities

- need for coherence with Common Agricultural Policy
- need to take into account climate change
- need for coherence with Water Framework Directive implementation; part of respondents requested closer links or an amendment of this Directive, others voiced caution
- need for close cooperation and coherence with research efforts
- EU funding instruments to allow for support of flood-related measures in all regions of Europe
- Role of the insurance sector

On organisation and management:

- efforts for flood prevention/protection to build on what already exists, and not to reduplicate efforts
- already ongoing successful initiatives must not be slowed down
- coastal regions not to be assigned to river basins, as the challenges are different

On flood mapping

- exemptions from flood mapping to be carefully considered ('no blank cheques')
- urban flooding to be considered as well

On flood risk management plans

- all elements of the management cycle to be considered; importance of awareness and preparedness; avoid a merely disaster-driven approach
- early involvement of the public, of stakeholders, local communities, NGOs and landowners
- focus on preventive measures, not just disaster response and engineering solutions
- no further construction in flood plains; unsealing of surface to reduce runoff
- regularly review of flood risk management plans
- calls for more uniform levels of protection, but also for sufficient flexibility
- role of groundwater as a cause for flooding to be considered
- role of forests in flood risk management to be considered
- balance of costs and benefits

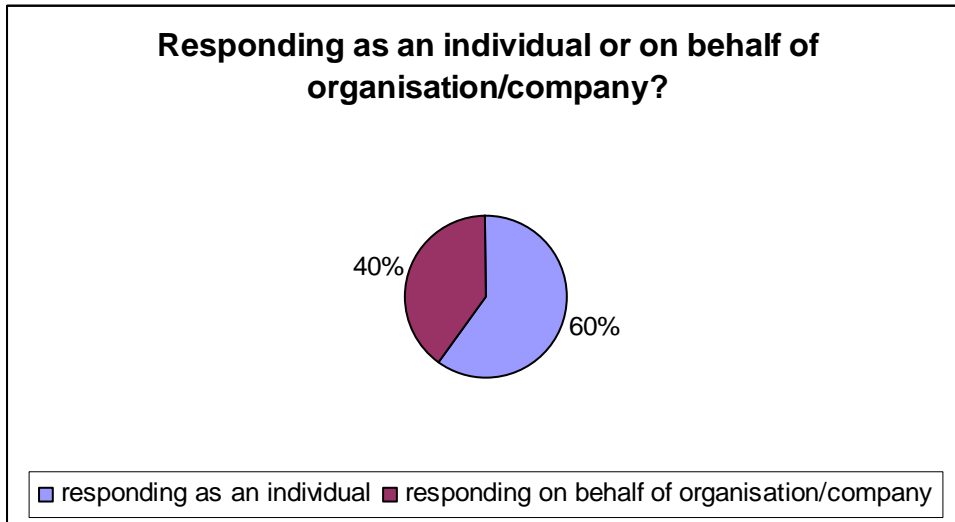
Several respondents deplored that the questionnaire was available only in English (note: All comments by email and mail in other languages have been equally considered by the Commission, as were those received shortly after the deadline).

8. The following pages provide more in-depth information on the responses received, as well as in full text all the additional comments received, both those submitted on the Internet and those submitted by separate email in annexes.
9. The full text of all comments received is contained in the annexes.

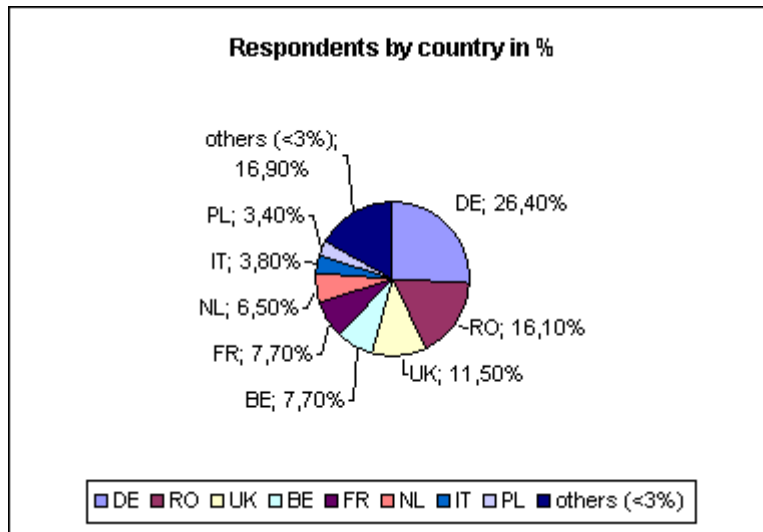
QUESTIONNAIRE

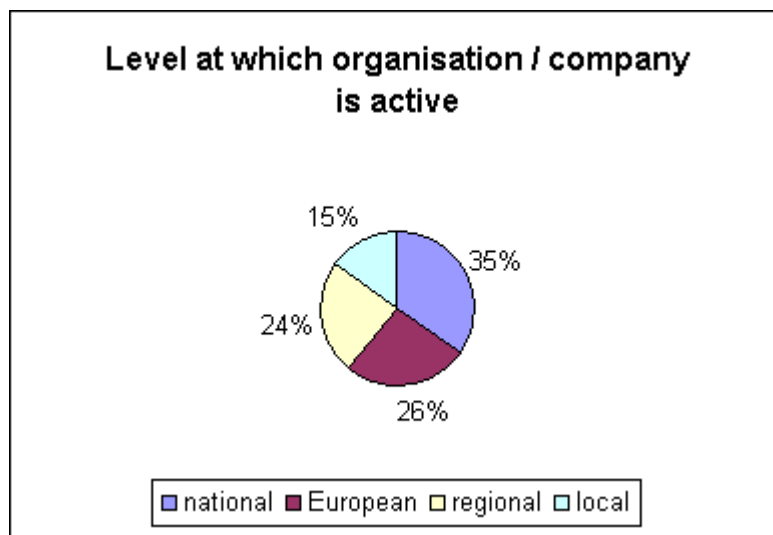
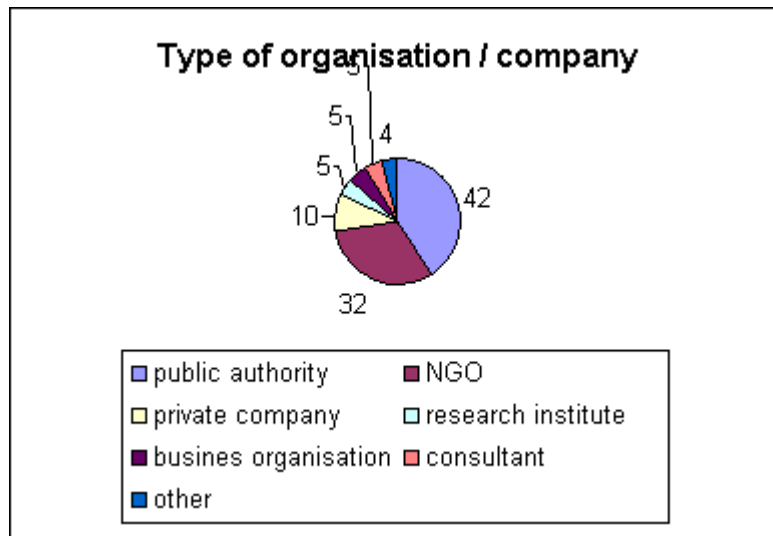
1) Respondent identification

Q1 - Are you replying on behalf of an organisation, company, institution or as an individual? (compulsory)



Country where you/the organisation/company are/is established:





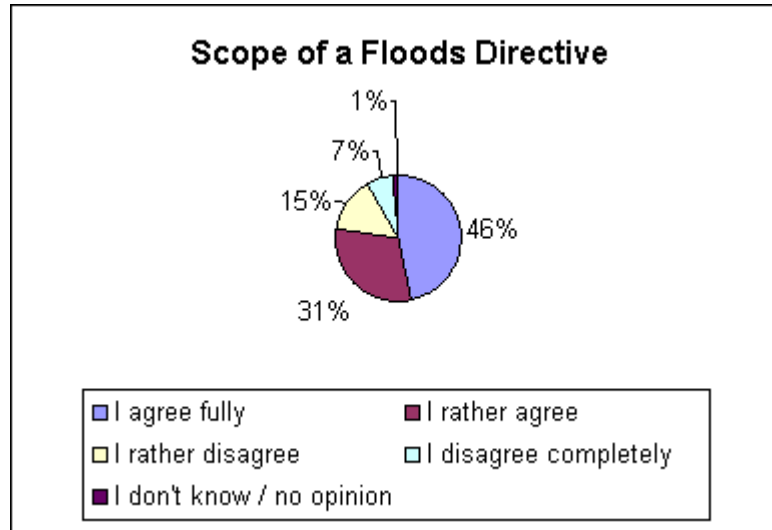
Q2 - Have/has you/your organisation participated in the stakeholder consultation process on the EU Flood Action Programme during January to April 2005?



2) Scope of a future EU Floods Directive

A new Floods Directive is foreseen to address all river basins and coastal areas where there is a risk of flood related damage. Where the risk of damage to people, property and/or environment is minimal or where there are no human settlements, infrastructure or other goods requiring protection, Member States would not be required to take action.

Q3 – Do you agree with this approach on the scope of a Floods Directive?

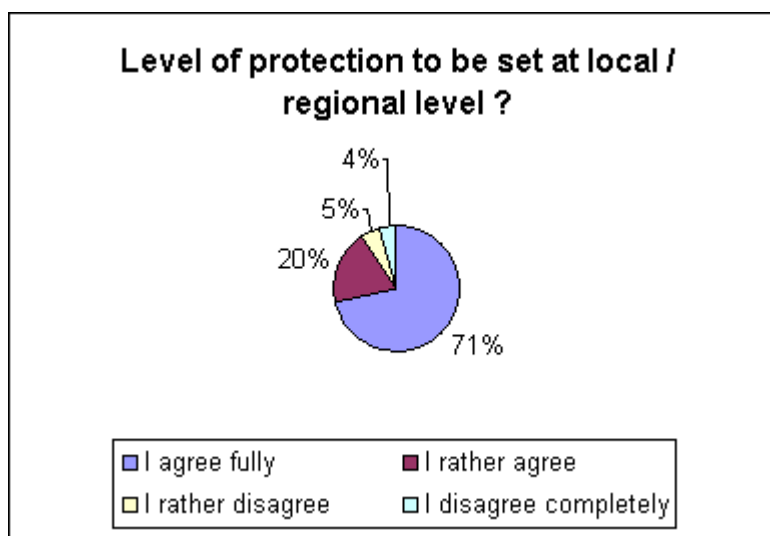


3) Level of protection

There are different types of floods throughout Europe, e.g. river floods, flash floods and coastal floods. Hence, there the risk of floods varies across the countries and regions of the EU, as do the consequences of flood events, depending on the local and regional circumstances.

Because of this wider variety, a new Floods Directive foresees to have the desirable level of protection to be defined at local/regional level, and coordinated with neighbours upstream and downstream sharing the same river (sub-)basins.

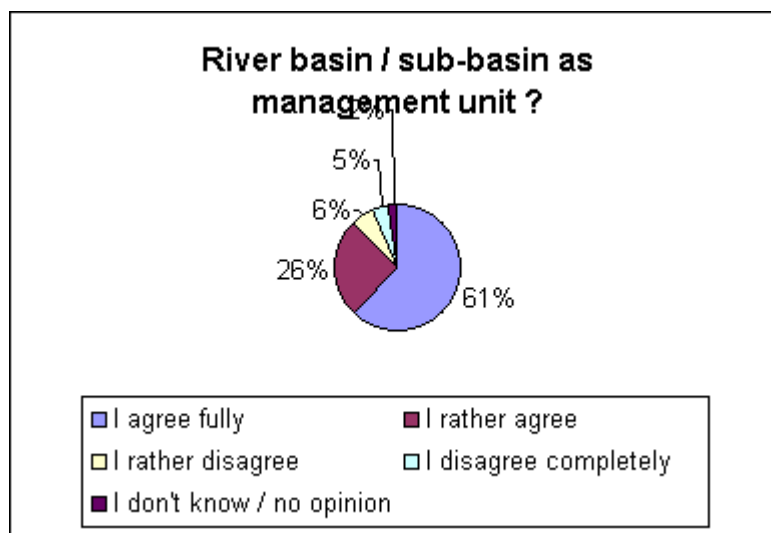
Q4 – Do you agree with this approach on setting the level of protection at a local/regional level?



4) Management unit

Under a new Floods Directive, cooperation, planning and acting on floods problems should be based on river basins (catchments) or sub-basins as the coordination and management unit. Coastal areas with a flood risk should be assigned to the nearest or most appropriate river basin.

Q5 - Do you agree with the use of river basins or sub-basins as the management unit for the implementation of the EU Flood Action Programme, and in particular a new Floods Directive?

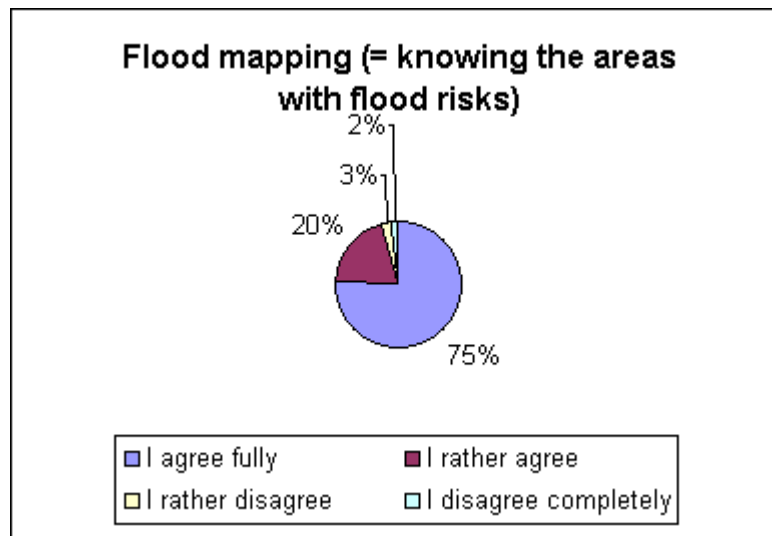


5) Flood maps

Under a new Floods Directive, flood maps should be developed for each river basin / sub-basin / coastal area with flood risk. These flood maps are showing the areas at risk of flooding and the consequences, and should

- increase public awareness of the areas where floods can occur
- support the processes of prioritising ,justifying and targeting investments
- support the development of flood risk management plans, spatial planning and emergency plans.

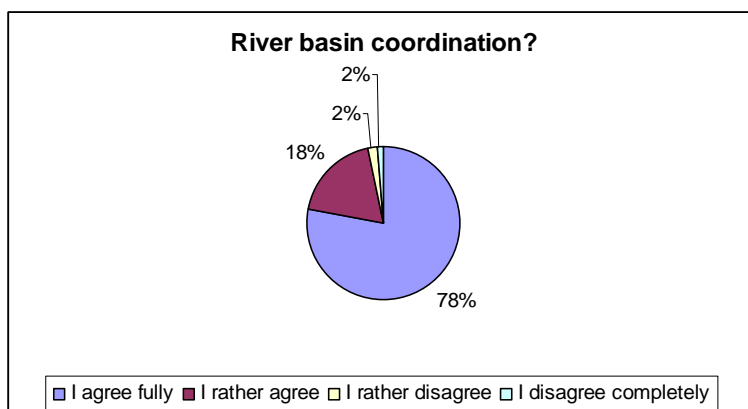
Q6 – Do you agree with this approach on flood maps?



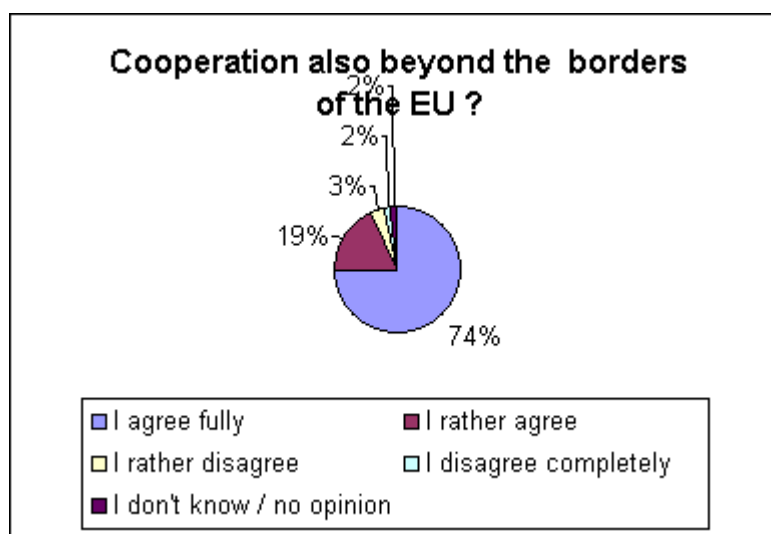
6) Flood risk management plans

Flood risk management plans would, under a new EU Floods Directive, be the operational instrument for defining the appropriate objectives and strategies for flood risk management as well as the measures to achieve it.

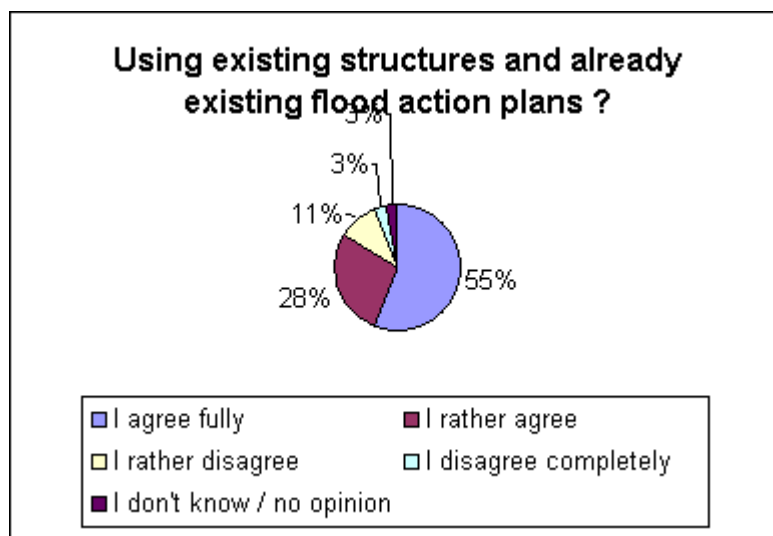
Q7 – In the case of a river basin falling entirely within the EU but shared between several Member States, do you agree that measures on flood risk management should be elaborated in coordination across the whole river basin or sub-basin as the management unit?



Q8 – In the case of a river basin extending beyond the boundaries of the EU, do you agree that Member States should endeavour to achieve such coordination not only with Member States but also with countries beyond the boundaries of the EU?



Q9 – Do you agree that, in developing and implementing flood risk management plans, existing structures should be used as much as possible, stemming from International Agreements such as International River Conventions or cooperations, and taking on board flood action plans already developed within such Conventions?

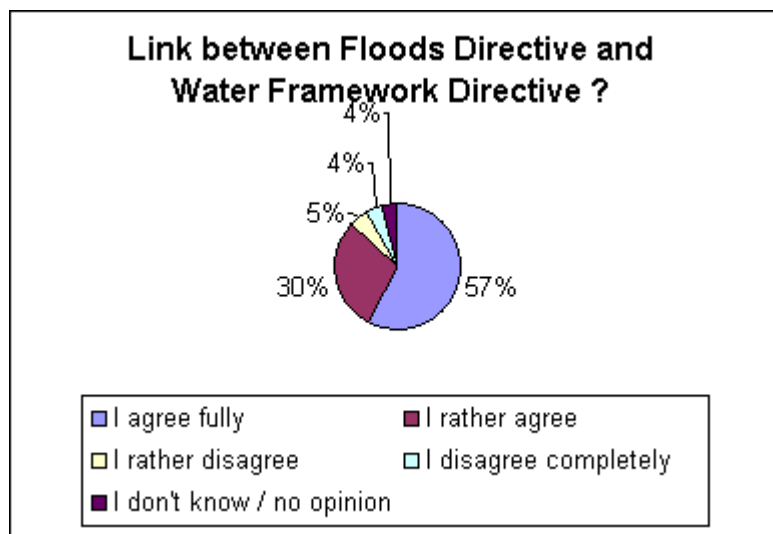


7) Link between water quality and flood risk management

The European Union has already given itself a comprehensive instrument for water quality, the Water Framework Directive. This Directive is protecting all our waters, rivers, lakes, coastal waters and groundwaters, and sets to objective to achieve/maintain good status of all waters, as a rule by 2015.

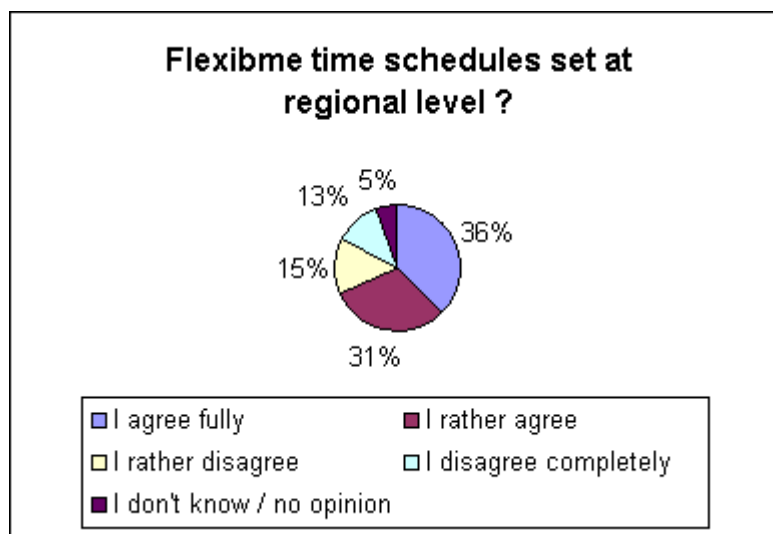
River basins as well as the vast majority of stakeholders are identical for water quality management and for flood risk management, and there are crucial interrelations, and a wealth of possible synergies between flood-related measures and water quality management.

Q10 – Do you agree that a new Floods Directive should provide for a pragmatic link to the Water Framework Directive, the key and integrating element of European Union water policy, thus ensuring consistency and avoid double efforts?



8) Timeframe for implementation

Q11 – Do you think a new Floods Directive should, for achieving the objectives to reduce flood risks foresee flexible time schedules set at the regional level?



9) Conclusions

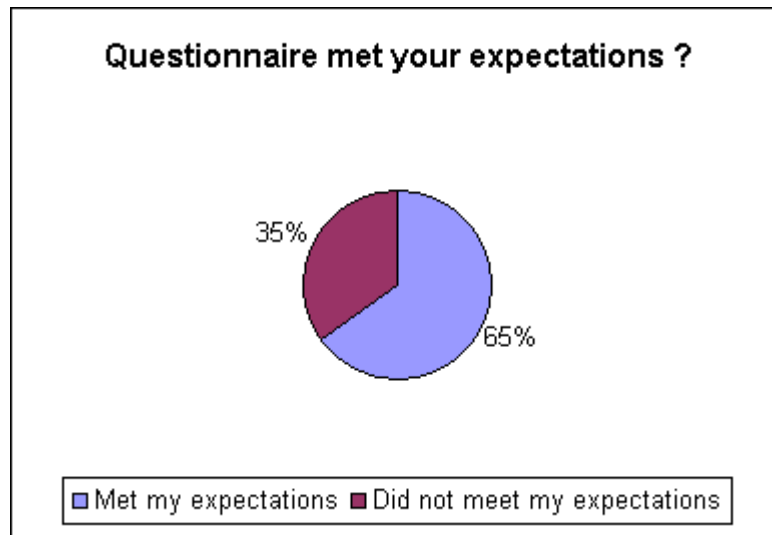
Q12 - If you would disagree or prefer other options not listed in this questionnaire please specify and explain them briefly.

The Commission has received comments via the questionnaire and separate via email. The comments received via the questionnaire are included in Annex 1. The comments received by separate email are included in Annex 2 (separate document).

10) Questionnaire

Thank you for your co-operation

Q13 - What is your opinion of this questionnaire?



Q14 - If the questionnaire did not meet your expectations - why?

