

Workshop 5 : A vision for tomorrow on the Meuse basin

Moderated by : Sonja KOEPPPEL

Assisted by : Sarah Combalbert

Introduction :

- *Jurgen Tack, President of the International Meuse Commission*

Mr Tack remembered the missions of the International Meuse Commission which was created in 2002 with the signing of the Gand agreement in order to sustainably managed water in the Meuse catchment. The Agreement were signed by the Walloon and the Brussels Region, Flanders, Netherlands, France, Germany, Belgium and Luxembourg and started to the 1st of December 2006. The IMC has two main objectives:

- The coordination of the actions required by the Water framework Directive
- The coordination of the actions required by the Flood framework Directive

It is also in charge to emit some advices and recommendations to the stakeholders to prevent and face to accidental pollutions, with the provision of shared warning systems.

The IMC follows an action plan and is gathered once a year. To prepare this annual event, 5 permanent working groups and some temporary focus groups are gathered regularly. Mr Jurgen Tack is actually the President.

He insisted on the role of the AMICE project which strengthening the knowledge on the climate change scenarios and impacts and highlighted the future issue of low-flows.

- *Sonja Koeppel, UNECE Water Convention secretariat, Coordinator of climate change activities*

Sonja remembered the interest to cooperate at the catchment scale and shared her own experience at the UNECE Water Convention, an organization which supports a number of transboundary cooperation projects and provides a platform for sharing experiences. Several catchments are concerned as the Danube, Dniester, Rhine, Neman, Senegal, Chu-Talas, and of course, the Meuse basin!!!

Pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins



Aim of the Workshop 5:

The aim of the workshop 5 untitled “a vision for tomorrow on the Meuse basin” was to develop ideas, methods, roadmaps, networks or even project proposals to close the remaining gaps in terms of international cooperation, long-term planning and political involvement. It aimed particularly to answer to the following questions:

- How to use the AMICE results?
- What to do after AMICE? How to mainstream results in national and transboundary activities?
- How to continue the partnership and momentum?
- How to really adapt at the transboundary level? Adaptation strategy?
- Role of different actors, such as the Meuse Commission, national level etc.

In the workshops, the achievements of AMICE will be point of departure, so that the workshops can lead to specific recommendations?

Organization of the workshop:

The participants were invited to answer to a series of questions; first, in group of two persons, to a biggest group of 8, on a pyramidal system. One person of the group of 8 is then invited to restate the whole of the discussions. Participants were almost 40 for this workshop and most of them chose to do directly the group of 8 (or more), demonstrating the good atmosphere in the room.

The question asked for the group of 2 was the more personal:

- How will you use the results of the AMICE project in your daily work?

The groups of 4 needed to answer to the following questions:

- How to mainstream the AMICE results and transboundary aspects in general in the policies of the Meuse territories?
- How would you support this transfer?
- What is missing? Ideas for AMICE 2?

And, finally, for the group of 8, the questions were:

- How to develop and implement a transboundary adaptation strategy for the Meuse basin based on the AMICE results in order to adapt the Meuse to climate change?
- Which role can different institutions for transboundary cooperation, such as the Meuse Commissions and the countries represented in it, play in adapting the Meuse to climate change and in carrying forward the AMICE results and partnership?

Background:

Results demonstrated by the AMICE project (in relation with this topic):

- Part of our results (workpackage 1 on the hydrology and hydraulics of the Meuse and effects of climate change) are part of the agenda/work program of the IMC working group on hydrology.
- These scenarios can be used by the IMC in the process of incorporating climate change adaptation in the river basin management plans.
- AMICE has achieved a strong and cooperating network of water management and knowledge institutes.
- AMICE achieved a shared understanding of climate change effects on the basin, of transnational threats and of regional specific situations.
- It was important to have a common language for the complete river basin. Management authorities are now talking about “one and the same” river, when they talk about the Meuse.
- Two intensive and constructive workshops were organized for stakeholders (20 participants), not directly involved in AMICE, to share their knowledge of the Meuse basin and how to adapt it to climate change.
- This joint approach revealed that stakeholders and decision-makers in the Meuse river basin share a common vision for the river basin in the year 2100, while acknowledging that several challenges have to be overcome to reach a joint roadmap. The most prominent common challenges in this respect appeared to be ‘water quantity’ (too much or too little water) and ‘coordination and cooperation’.
- Past experience on flood and low-flow management calls for a cooperation and a downstream/upstream solidarity to adapt to climate change.

Lessons learnt by the AMICE Partners :

- Global challenges at the basin level call for local level action, but the local level actions need be coordinated at the basin level to be efficient.
- AMICE results must be mainstreamed / integrated into all policies and actions from the very local to the basin level. Make adaptation happen everywhere.
- Open the Meuse Commission to tributary managers and regional stakeholders?
- Meuse Commission takes over the AMICE Partnership ?

Gaps not covered by AMICE, potential subjects for new cooperation :

- Blueprint for climate adaptation : this is dealt with by the EU level, not the basin level.
- An action plan for low flows should be developed in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.
- Raise attention of the public about sea water temperature rise.
- AMICE produced the building blocks for the adaptation strategy and started the international stakeholder process. It's clear the process is not finished and must come into interaction with national adaptation plans.
- The respective managing authorities should organize or use existing national workshops and/or working groups to discuss the results of AMICE and identify the appropriate measures, both national, bilateral and transnational.
- A comparative study of how governance of climate change adaptation is carried out in the different countries of the Meuse river basin could be carried out

- Establish a close link with other climate change adaptation strategies for transnational river basins, such as, for example, the strategies of the Danube and Rhine... Cf the UNECE taskforce on Water and Climate.
- A better integration of the Water Framework Directive/Flood Directive/Natura 2000.
- How can we motivate policy makers to act? The technology exists, all they need to do is use it with a long-term vision of the impacts and benefits.

Conclusions of the workshop 5:

The main conclusions of the workshop were that it appears important to maintain the AMICE network in the future and that the IMC could be the coordinator of such partnership, in order to make use of the existing momentum.

Then, the different workshops and presentations during the final conference revealed a gap in terms of low-flows management. The aim of the future works could be to further elaborate results on this issue and its ecological implications.

The taken into account of climate change in the development of new territorial or sectoral strategies is also a good opportunity making use of best practices.

Such partnership must works to put results and knowledge to higher level to insure the memory of the risk, harmonize actions and avoiding mistakes of the past.

A lot of participants underlined the importance of communication and education of the public, which need to be optimized between geographic entities and also beyond the Meuse basin, at different policy levels and towards the broader public and future generations.