



PRESS RELEASE

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Public thematic report

INSUFFICIENT FLOOD RISK PREVENTION IN ÎLE-DE-FRANCE

In the Seine basin, flooding is one of the biggest natural hazards, after drought. The Île-de-France metropolitan area is particularly vulnerable to the risk of flooding. The last major floods occurred in May-June 2016 and January-February 2018, costing €1.4 billion and €150 million to €200 million respectively. According to a recent OECD assessment, a 100-year flood reaching the maximum level of the 1910 flood (8.60 metres at the Austerlitz bridge) would cause direct damage totalling around €30 billion. However, the insufficient consideration of this risk by the population and by local government has resulted in a deficient prevention strategy, notably due to poor coordination. The report published today, drawn up by a joint panel of the Court of Accounts and the Île-de-France Regional Audit Chamber, assesses the state of awareness of the risk linked to a 100-year flood of the Seine river, as well as the objectives set and the financial means deployed to prevent this risk. It also examines the effectiveness and efficiency of action taken to reduce this risk. Finally, it analyses the extent to which the governance and sustainable management strategy for the Seine river have contributed to flood risk prevention in recent years.

A major risk and severity insufficiently taken into account

Many maps covering overflow flooding are available to the general public through flood risk prevention plans (PPRI) and on dedicated websites (such as "Cartoviz - potential flood zones"). However, floods caused by rising groundwater and runoff are more difficult to assess - even though runoff accounts for about one third of insured damage in the Île-de-France region. Central government must ensure that all stakeholders (citizens, companies, administrations) have access to the information available on this risk, particularly on flooding by rising groundwater. The Court also recommends increasing awareness and regularly checking the perception of this risk among the population of Île-de-France. Local authorities have not set quantified damage reduction targets and have made little use of the major natural risk prevention fund for the Île-de-France region: from 2009 to 2021, the cumulative amount of its commitments amounted to €65 million and its expenditure totalled €23 million, well below the expenditure of other regions affected by flood risk.

Action to reduce the risk of flooding is still limited





The Paris conurbation is much less protected against major floods than other international cities: the theoretical level of protection concerns a return period for a flood event of 30-50 years for the inner suburbs, 10-20 years between the Pont d'Iéna and Issy-les-Moulineaux, and 100 years for the rest of Paris. In comparison, London is protected against a 1,000-year flood return period and is aiming for protection for a return period of 10,000 years by 2100. Various means have been put in place to deal with these risks: major investments in upgrading dykes and walls covering 120 km (taken over with difficulty by the Greater Paris Metropolitan Authority) and the completion of the La Bassée retention basin project, intended to strengthen protection upstream of Paris, the preservation and restoration of floodplains, the regulation of urban development in at-risk areas and the design of resilient housing. However, the Court warns of the disparate preparation by the operators of infrastructure networks likely to be exposed (electricity, gas, telecommunications, digital network, transport, heating, drinking water, sanitation), as well as the absence of action by the region to help small and medium-sized enterprises reduce their vulnerability. Finally, it emphasises that an insufficient number of initiatives have been implemented to protect cultural heritage in Île-de-France.

Absence of a coordinated strategy for the Seine river basin

Île-de-France is part of the Seine river basin. It is at this level that central government, local government and all stakeholders (infrastructure network operators, non-profit organisations, companies, insurers) must coordinate their efforts with a view to effectively managing risk prevention. However, this coordination is currently insufficient. The 2007-2013 Seine plan has not gained effective support from the various stakeholders, particularly the regions (except for Grand Est), for a shared vision of the river and common objectives - unlike the Loire and Rhône-Saône plans. For example, there is no working forum on topics relating to the risk of flooding of the Seine like the "stakeholder forums" organised in the Loire and Rhône basins. However, the dispersion of action and stakeholders is contrary to the principle of solidarity, which is supposed to be the cornerstone of the national flood risk strategy, and which aims to share responsibilities and efforts to reduce the negative consequences of flooding fairly between all territories and stakeholders: upstream-downstream, urban-rural, right bank-left bank. Accordingly, the Court recommends that central government and the competent local government authorities report annually on the status of the flood risk prevention policy by bringing together representatives of all stakeholders.

[Read the report](#)

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