Background

In November 2014 RACVIAC - Centre for Security Cooperation, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina, organized a regional Conference titled “Floods in South-Eastern Europe – Lessons Learned and Ways Ahead”.


The events’ conclusions emphasized the necessity of closer and more effective regional collaboration in controlling and protecting against floods in the light of the EU Floods Directive. Therefore, it was underlined that it is of key importance to protect the vulnerability of the river flow infrastructure by joint preventive measures and flood readiness.
During the Conference in Sarajevo one of the presentations was related to the “Management of Flood Risk in Lower Austria” where the participants had the opportunity to learn about practical and effective use of the “mobile flood protection systems” in Lower Austria. That is why RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation, together with the Austrian authorities, had decided to organize this study trip in order to present how the system is being used in practice to Subject Matter Experts and decision-making officials from RACVIAC Members, with examples of highly successful real life floods prevention and protection systems, and to introduce the emergency response and disaster relief system in the Republic of Austria.

**Activity Venue and Participation**

The field study trip was realized from September 26th to 28th, 2016 in the Province of Lower Austria. The event lasted 3 working days, and it was a combination of theoretical presentations and practical demonstrations of flood prevention systems. Participants from RACVIAC Members and other RACVIAC participants participated in the event, as follows: AL (2), HR (2), ME (1), MK (2), RS (1), Kosovo* (1).

The first day of the activity took place in the Fire Brigade School in Tulln, where the participants had an opportunity to learn about the programme of the Fire Brigade School, and to inspect the training facilities.

The next day included a series of presentations aimed at introducing participants to the different organizational aspects of the key elements of the disaster relief system in Lower Austria (Riemer, Bezirkshauptmann Tulln), with an emphasis on flood prevention and protection (Lutz, Leiter Gruppe Wasser NÖ). The participants had an opportunity to listen to the presentations on Flood Prediction and international cooperation in Lower Austria (Labut, Leiter Abt. Hydrologie), the Fire Brigade System in Lower Austria (Fahrafellner, Landesfeuerwehrkdt NÖ), the participation of the MoD on the provincial level (Führer, MilKdt NÖ), as well as the participation of the Red Cross and Samariterbund on the provincial level (Sauer, Präsident NÖRK/Pendl, Präsident Samariterbund).

Furthermore, the participants had an opportunity to learn more about the practical and effective use of the "mobile" flood protection system and how it is actually being used. They visited the City of Mautern, where they listened to the Welcome address of the member of the Provincial Government Stephan Pemkopf as envoy of Governor Erwin Pröll, followed

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of independence. (In accordance with Arrangements regarding regional representation and cooperation)
by press statements, after which they viewed an annual exercise on the utilization of the mobile flood protection system along the Danube River (Teilaufbau durch FF Mautern).

Participants then visited the City of Krems and viewed the torrent and avalanche protection system (WLV-Sperre Bründlgraben), and, finally, the City of Dross, where they viewed the decentralized artificial water storage basins.

During the last day of the event the participants had an opportunity to visit the National Response Centre at the Ministry of Interior in Vienna and to observe how the entire disaster relief system is integrated at the state level.

Having had an opportunity to hear 16 lecturers, key experts and speakers from different branches in this area, such as the Head of the Tulln District, the Head of the Water Section, the Head of the Hydrology Department, the Regional Fire Commander, the Staff Officers in the Military Command and in the Fire Brigade School, the representative of the Austrian Red Cross, the Member of the Provincial Government of LA (Lower Austria), the representative of the Austrian Service for Torrent and Avalanche Control, the Military Commander of the Province of LA (General), and the high representative in the National Emergency Response Centre at the MOI AT, the overall conclusion of the Field Study Trip was that it had been successful, that the objectives and the goals were met, and that the further organizing of activities in this area is of great interest for the countries in the region.

RACVIAC – Centre for Security Cooperation extends its appreciation for the efforts of the Austrian authorities in supporting the event, especially to the Fire Brigade School, the Government of Lower Austria and the Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports.