

# [Commission takes Spain to Court for failure to act on protection against flooding](#)

The European Commission is referring **Spain** to the Court of Justice of the EU over a failure to comply with EU rules on flood prevention under the Floods Directive ([Directive 2007/60/EC](#)). The Directive aims to reduce and manage the risks that floods pose to human health, the environment, economic activity and cultural heritage. It does so by defining objectives for Member States and setting out the right measures to achieve these objectives. The Flood Risk Management Plans lay out in detail how the reduction of flood risk is to be achieved.

Although floods occur naturally, human activity increases their likelihood and the adverse impact of extreme flood events. The scale and frequency of floods are likely to increase due to climate change. In addition, the risk rises in places where the number of people and economic assets located in flood risk zones continues to grow or the capacity of soil to absorb flood waters reduces.

Under EU law, Member States had to complete and publish flood risk management plans, and notify them to the Commission by 22 March 2016. Spain failed to inform the Commission of the flood risk management plans for the river basin districts of the Canary Islands. Therefore, the Commission opened an infringement procedure against Spain by sending a letter of formal notice to the country in [March 2018](#). The Commission urged the Spanish authorities to complete, publish and communicate flood risk management plans for all seven river basin districts in the Canary Islands (El Hierro, Fuerteventura, Gran Canaria, La Gomera, La Palma, Lanzarote, and Tenerife).

Since Spain did not address the inconsistencies, the Commission then sent a reasoned opinion to Spain in [July 2018](#). As the situation persists today in the seven river basin districts in the Canary Islands, the Commission has decided to bring Spain to the Court of Justice of the EU.

## **Background**

The EU Floods Directive ([Directive 2007/60/EC](#)), which entered into force in 2007 requires Member States to assess the risk from flooding, to map the flood extent and to take adequate and coordinated measures to reduce this flood risk. EU rules apply to inland waters as well as all coastal waters across the whole territory of the EU.

The Directive requires Member States to first carry out a preliminary assessment by 2011 to identify the river basins and associated coastal areas at risk of flooding. For such zones they would then need to draw up flood hazard and risk maps by 2013 and establish flood risk management plans focused on prevention, protection and preparedness by 2015.

The Commission is currently finalising its assessment of the Member States' first Flood Risk Management Plans and will publish a report in the coming period.

**For More Information**

- On the key decisions in the January 2019 infringements package, see full [MEMO/19/462](#).
- On the general infringements procedure, see [MEMO/12/12](#).
- On the [EU infringements procedure](#).