



## **Natural hazards and the European Commission – February meetings**

On February 29<sup>th</sup> 2008, EFG Board members have met with the European Commission to continue the discussion on natural hazards, the activities of the expert panel on natural hazards and our future collaboration with the European Commission. We have met with DG Research, unit on Natural hazards research (Dr. D. Peter & Dr. B. van Gelsten), and with DG Environment, unit on Civil Protection (Dr. Perotto & Dr. T. de Lannoy).

Our history on natural hazards goes back to February 2003, in which we participated in a stakeholder meeting, set up by DG Environment, unit on Civil Protection, to discuss a proposal on European guidelines. To be able to provide high quality advice and recommendations to the European Commission on this subject, we set up a European panel of experts on natural hazards. Currently the panel consists of approximately 35 experts, with varying background. Experts involved are working for national geological surveys, at universities or research institutes, for commercial companies, for the international centre for geohazards, are member of a national working group on natural hazards, or work as private consultants. Together they represent around 20 European countries. The experts have different specialities, including experts on landslides, earthquakes, flooding, tsunamis, as well as remote sensing specialists.

After the meeting in 2003, we have written many advice documents on natural hazards, a manifesto with key recommendations to mitigate the effect. We have participated as the only geological organisation in a congress at the European Parliament, organised by the European Commission. We have been requested to provide input to the 7<sup>th</sup> Research Framework Programme; have regular communication and meetings with the European Commission, and so on. The expert panel on natural hazards has been very active and have again an interesting to-do list after these meetings with EC in February.

The meetings were very fruitful and have led to new action points that we can take up with the expert panel. For example, DG Research requested specific feedback and improved communication between the expert panel and them. DG Environment, Civil Protection, is also very interested in feedback. From the latter, we received a special invitation to attend a stakeholder meeting on Disaster Prevention, taking



place Monday 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2008. The meeting will be attended by EFG office director Isabel Fernandez, and by the new coordinator of the EFG expert panel on natural hazards, Andrew Gibson (British Geological Survey). DG Environment, Civil Protection, have emphasized their strong interest in our attendance at this meeting.

Andrew Gibson will soon take over the coordination of the natural hazards expert panel from Herald Ligtenberg, who has initiated and steered the panel for five years. Andrew Gibson is Head of Land Use and Development Science for the British Geological Survey. He coordinates all work related to Geohazard, Engineering Geology, Geotechnics, Urban Geology and Soil Science. We wish him good luck in his new role.

To both DG's we have also proposed to organise a one-day conference on natural hazards in Brussels, like we have done at our annual meeting in Rome. Main objectives of this conference would be: 1) to bring together policy-makers, land-use planners, geo-experts and insurance companies to continue the discussion how to reduce the impacts of natural hazards; 2) to have more involvement of members from European Commission and European Parliament. The proposal was very well received by both DG's of the European Commission. We have discussed close collaboration. The European Commission will assist in the organisation by steering its content, such that the topics and discussions will lead to better (geological) insight and will provide them answers to optimise (proposals for) directives. Together with the expert panel on natural hazards we will take this forward.