

# EUROPE-INBO 2012: 10<sup>th</sup> European Conference on WFD implementation

## Istanbul – Turkey – 17 – 19 October 2012 – Summary of the final declaration

The 10th conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group was held in Istanbul, Turkey, from 17 to 19 October 2012, at the invitation of the Turkish Water Institute (SUEN). It gathered 354 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as Research Centres, Universities, NGOs and companies from 47 Countries.

The conference was organized around six major issues:

- Water, food and energy nexus;
- Cooperation with EECCA and Mediterranean Partner Countries on the implementation of the WFD principles and methods;
- Improve water governance in transboundary river basins;
- Adapt to challenges linked to climate change and to the prevention of extreme phenomena: with the implementation of the Floods Directive and the reduction of drought risk in particular;
- Develop new approaches to river restoration and protection of water ecosystems;
- Economic analysis, cost recovery under the WFD, value of ecosystems services, water resources use efficiency, involvement and solidarity of the stakeholders,

The experience gained in the European Union with the implementation of the WFD and other EU directives on water and tools developed for this concern are interesting not only the Candidate Countries, but also other Partner Countries of the Balkans, EECCA and the Mediterranean, which could consider adjustments in their own institutional, geo-climatic and socioeconomic situation, through enhanced cooperation.

The EUROPE-INBO group members made recommendations to further improve water resources management in the European Union and in the Partner Countries, relying in particular on this experience.

- River basin management is truly the most appropriate way to manage water resources, allowing more consistency between the different sectors, including between water, energy, agriculture, and food and waterways transport and better integration between land management and water resources management to cope with present and future challenges, including those related to global change.
- Despite progress made, the WFD which resolutely adopts this approach in the European Union, as well as its "Daughter Directives" or the basic measures of its annex A, must improve their articulation with the "Floods", "Marine Waters", "Renewable Energy" Directives, with the Common Agricultural Policy and the system of official aid. Similarly, coordination is needed between different administrative services, sometimes located in different ministries, which implement them, e.g. between the services that manage floods and drought plans and those which are directly in charge of implementing the WFD.
- The evaluation policy (fitness check) implemented by the European Commission which should lead to a "Blueprint" (pre-programmed blue paper) at the end of November 2012, already shows several areas for improvement: the need to reduce water demand by integrating efficiency requirements in the various water uses especially in buildings (public and private, apartment blocks or houses, industry) and agriculture, better regulations on drought and flood control, by strengthening the link between water planning and land use planning in particular, the clear definition of the cost recovery principle and the wider use of economic instruments, improving availability of quality information on water resources, especially when uncertainty increases.
- The participants in the "EUROPE-INBO 2012" Conference consider that, at this stage, it is advisable to make efforts primarily on the application of the current water legislation and not to produce a new legislation.
- Better cross-sectoral integration must necessarily be sought for to achieve sustainable water resources management in the future, especially with the Common Agricultural Policy, regional

policy, renewable energy and waterways transport policies, and with land use, while also taking into account the need to adapt to climate change

- It seems necessary to find a balance that allows both effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive and compliance with the objectives of renewable energy production that Europe has set and the objectives of the CAP.
- Discussions on adaptation to global changes, especially climate change, should be introduced as soon as possible for preparing the second phase of River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) 2015-2021 especially for analyzing their effects and vulnerability and for defining adaptation measures to be recommended. In a context of uncertainty. In this context, the choice of appropriate indicators to assess the "water Footprint" of the different uses and improve efficiency in relation to water scarcity is fundamental.
- It is also necessary to develop new approaches to river restoration and protection of water ecosystems, by passing from a specific approach to large-scale restoration projects, articulated with different multi-purpose planning mechanisms on appropriate scales. To do this, we need to promote the sharing of information, expertise and best practices, as well as improving knowledge through appropriate actions in R&D, hydromorphology and restoration of rivers and wetlands.
- Water governance in transboundary basins should be improved especially in the "International Districts" created for the EU-WFD implementation, which requires cooperation agreements signed by riparian countries to establish the conditions for appropriate governance, based on mutual confidence, common understanding of the basin problems, on available and shared accurate data and analysis, with the involvement of stakeholders. The role and means of the International Commissions for transboundary rivers, either existing or being established, should be strengthened to enable effective WFD implementation in the concerned EU countries.
- To cope with the challenges related to global change (climate and socio-economy) and to the prevention of extreme phenomena, it is necessary to integrate adaptation to these changes in the key steps of the drafting of River Basin Management Plans, taking care to introduce an uncertainty logic to define sufficiently flexible measures. Policies should be adaptive enough to allow progressive adaptation and basin experiments involved in such a process should encourage the building of new institutional and individual capacities that are required.

The WFD can be used as a toolbox for addressing adaptation to climate change in areas at risk to reduce the impacts of droughts and flood risks.

- Regarding the economic analysis, it is necessary to improve knowledge on how subsidies were considered in the RBMPs and to clearly define cost recovery. The assessment of Environmental and Resource (E&R) costs requires better methodology and data availability while the economic approach to ecosystem services is to be strengthened.
- Monitoring and information systems should be improved and adapted to the objectives to be achieved and better compared between member countries, but the issue of their investment and operation costs arises in many situations..
- The high cost of implementing the WFD and "daughter" directives raises a problem in the context of an economic and budgetary crisis to achieve the set-out ambitious goals on schedule.
- The goals of controlling non-point pollution and restoring degraded water ecosystems may not be achieved for many water bodies in any case for the 2015 or even later deadlines. New measures will be required implying additional means which are not currently planned or have been pushed back to the end of the 2021 - 2027 period.
- Finally, the involvement of stakeholders and the public is crucial to improve water resources management, their early information and participation in the decision-making processes should be further increased. Appropriation by all users of the water-related policies and of the resulting measures is essential for progress and effectiveness of undertaken actions.

- Recognizing, on the one hand, the interest of the WFD principles and methods for other regions of the world, and on the other, the sharing of some transboundary water bodies with neighbouring countries of the EU, community cooperation with Partner Countries from the Mediterranean, the Balkans and Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia is to be pursued and increased.
- In particular, this cooperation should primarily focus on topics for dialogue and transboundary surface and groundwater management with the support of regional institutions, for strengthening national information systems and their harmonization with international reporting mechanisms, for training managers or planners of water resources and the participation of users, local authorities and associations.