Trans-boundary river basins in Spain and Portugal:

The Albufeira Agreement

Teodoro Estrela
Deputy Water Director
Ministry of Environment, and
Rural and Marine Affairs
The Albufeira Agreement was signed in 1998 to improve the cooperation between Portugal and Spain, in order to encourage the sustainable use of shared water courses and maintain and improve the ecological status of shared water bodies.

Trans-boundary basins in Spain and Portugal represent 46% of the Iberian mainland surface.

The Albufeira Agreement was signed in 1998 to improve the cooperation between Portugal and Spain, in order to encourage the sustainable use of shared water courses and, maintain and improve the ecological status of shared water bodies.
Main contents of the Albufeira Agreement

- **Institutional Regime** (Articles 20 and 23)
- **Exchange of Information** (Articles 5, 6 and 7 and Annex I)
- **Transboundary Impacts** (Articles 8 and 9 and Annex II)
- **Quality and Pollution** (Articles 13 y 14)
- **Water Uses** (Article 15)
- **Exceptional Situations** (Articles 17, 18 y 19)
- **Flow Regime** (Article 16, Additional Protocol and Annex)
Two bilateral bodies were created for the application and development of the Albufeira Agreement:

- The **Conference of the Parties**, with a high political level (formed by Ministers from both countries)

- The **Commission for the Development and Application of the Agreement (CADC)**, with a more technical content

The main technical elements of the CADC are the Working Groups.
Main tasks

- Exchange of information on WFD implementation
- Harmonisation of Geographic Information Systems
- Development of common cartography for boundary and transboundary water bodies
- Exchange of information on water quality
- Establishment of reaction mechanisms against pollution accidents
Main tasks:

- Creation of a common database on historical flow discharges
- Control of flow discharge regime
- Establishment of a new flow discharge regime
- Criteria harmonisation of Drought Indicator Systems
Main tasks:

- Use of EC CIRCA platform
- Data exchange
- Exchange of river basin management plan reports
- Elaboration of joint annual reports on Flow Discharges Regimes and Water Quality
Creation of CADC Web Page: www.cadc-albufeira.org

Organization of Technical Sessions on Public Participation
Main tasks:

- Exchange of information on infrastructures with possible transboundary impacts
- Coordination of emergency plan implementation
- Promotion of joint flood studies
The 2nd Conference of the Parties took place on February 19th, 2008 in Madrid.

The main agreed issues are:

- Endorsement of a new protocol concerning an innovative flow regimen in the international Albufeira Agreement.

- Creation of a Common Permanent Technical Secretariat.

- Endorsement of a Protocol for Action to apply the Strategic Environmental Assessment with cross border effects.
New flow discharge regime of the Albufeira Agreement

Before

Annual control of river flows

Spain guaranteed a minimum annual flow with a regime of exceptions.
This system sometimes presented large discharges fluctuations.

Now

Annual, three-monthly and weekly control of river flows

River flows will be guaranteed on a 3 monthly base.
In some cases minimum weekly river flows are established in order to preserve ecological flows.
When the precipitation in the previous 6 months is around 60-70% lower that in the reference period, there will be an exception situation.
Before

Ministry for Environment, Spatial Planning and Regional Development

Commission for the Application and Development of the Albufeira Agreement (CADC)

Working Groups on:
- Flow regimes, water scarcity and emergency situations
- Information exchange and public participation
- Security of the infrastructures and floods
- WFD and Water Quality

Ministry of Environment, and Rural and Marine Affairs

Portuguese Technical Secretariat

Spanish Technical Secretariat
Now is being implementing

**General concepts:**
- Every two years the headquarters of the PTS will switch between Madrid and Lisbon.
- It will be composed by civil servants from Portugal and Spain.

**Objectives:**
- Providing technical, administrative and promotional support to the CADC.
- Define methodologies for developing international RBMP for 2015
- Consolidate bases for bi-national public participation processes
INDEPENDENT RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS

Each country develops river basin planning according to its own legislation.

RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANS OF THE CORRESPONDING PARTS OF THE INTERNATIONAL RIVER BASIN DISTRICTS (SEPARATED REPORTS)

Elaboration of river basin plans for the corresponding part

Coordination: Structures derived from the Albufeira Agreement

Progressive elaboration of joint reports

A UNIQUE RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR EACH INTERNATIONAL RIVER BASIN DISTRICT