



RESEAU INTERNATIONAL DES ORGANISMES DE BASSIN
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS
RED INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANISMOS DE CUENCA
Международная сеть водохозяйственных организаций



« EUROPE INBO 2010 »
8th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE EUROPEAN WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

MEGEVE (FRANCE) – 22, 23 AND 24 SEPTEMBER 2010

« DECLARATION OF MEGEVE »

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The 8th conference of the “EUROPE-INBO” group took place in Megève, in France, from 22 to 24 September 2010, at the invitation of the **French Water Agencies**.

The conference gathered 177 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as of NGOs and companies, coming from 41 Countries (list of the countries in appendix I).

The EUROPE-INBO Group, created in 2003, is an integral part of the International Network of Basin Organizations and so has the same overall objectives as the world network: gathering the experience of professionals, administrations and organizations directly responsible for the implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM) at the level of river basins and facilitating the exchange of practices, knowledge and know-how. On a worldwide scale, among its range of actions, INBO is promoting the WFD principles and methodology in the international events as it was the case in Istanbul for the World Water Forum in 2009.

The regional networks of Central and Eastern Europe (CEENBO–Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organizations) and of the Mediterranean (MENBO - Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations) as well as the group of International Commissions and Transboundary Basin Organizations facilitate debates on IWRM in river basins in the enlarged European context.

More specifically, the EUROPE-INBO group focuses on the WFD implementation, facilitates thorough exchanges on the implementation of the directive, especially in the yearly plenary assemblies: Valencia (Spain) in 2003, Kracow (Poland) in 2004, Namur (Belgium) in 2005, Megève (France) in 2006, Rome (Italy) in 2007, Sibiu (Romania) in 2008.

The work of the “EUROPE-INBO” group aims at enriching the WFD Common Implementation Strategy (CIS), without duplicating the work already completed within this strategy.

The “EUROPE-INBO” Group allows the Basin Organizations and District Authorities to regularly meet, in an informal way, for exchanging their practical experience, identifying the operational problems and making specific proposals for the WFD implementation.

EUROPE-INBO also enhances the WFD concepts and allows experience feedback for the non-EU countries (Countries neighbors of the EU as well as countries of America, Africa and Asia).

Since its last General Assembly (Sibiu 2008), the “EUROPE-INBO” Group has had (activities/WWF5...).

After introductory speeches on the situation of the Directive implementation in France in the Rhone-Mediterranean & Corsica Basin, six successive round tables allowed dealing with the following issues:

- Progress made in the preparation of the WFD Management Plans: their contents, follow-up methods (indicators, management charts...),
- The Programs of Measures 2010 - 2015, implementation, stakeholders' mobilization, local contracts, financing of actions,
- Combined implementation of the WFD and « groundwater », « floods » and « marine strategy » Directives,
- Strategies for prevention of drought risks in Europe: national strategies, monitoring, warning systems,
- Measures to be planned for adapting Water Bodies to the effects of climate change, resources management, development of upper basins, upstream–downstream common cause, optimization of the water demands, agricultural policy, hydropower, navigation on waterways, reservoirs, transfers, etc.
- Cooperation with the neighboring Countries, non-members of the European Union, for the application of the WFD principles and methods.

The conference was also the opportunity for developing and formulating proposals for the regional European process of the next World Water Forum in 2012 in Marseilles.

Integrated and sound water resources management at the level of river basins is obviously essential worldwide!

The basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers are the relevant natural geographical territories in which to organize this integrated and sound management.

Indeed, river basins are the natural territories in which water runs on the soil or in the sub soil, whatever are the national or administrative boundaries or limits crossed.

Significant progress has already been made since the 1990s.

River basin management experienced a quick development in many countries, which made it the basis of their national legislation on water or experiment it in national or transboundary pilot basins.

Although the United Nations Convention of 21 May 1997, on the uses other than navigation on the international rivers, has not yet come into effect, its principles are now more and more recognized as a basis for relations among the riparian States concerned.

In addition, the European Water Framework Directive (WFD) has this approach by laying down an objective of “good ecological status” to be achieved in the national or international river basin districts.

The EUROPE-INBO Group reaffirmed all the interest of the WFD which allowed disseminating the concept of integrated basin management in the 27 EU countries as well as in Switzerland and Norway which committed themselves to jointly manage their water resources.

Indeed, the WFD is an incomparable example of coordinated water resources management in a region as diversified as Europe. In this sense, it is advisable to continue its promotion to the neighboring countries and to other areas of the world, as its methodology, process and approach are highly relevant for solving water problems.

The WFD also facilitated a transboundary approach to the management of rivers shared by several European countries, by also involving the countries non-members of the EU.

Since 2000, the WFD has been an unprecedented driving force on the European continent scale and considerable work was carried out. However, important challenges remain.

Thus, 170 river basin districts have being established across the E.U. 40 of them are international river basin districts and cover more than 60% of the EU territory, making international coordination one of the most significant issues and challenges for WFD implementation.

On first January 2010, all the countries should have passed from a phase of preparation to a new phase of real implementation with an obligation of results in due time!

As regards Management Plans:

Two very important deadlines have just been exceeded:

- the management plans of the river basin districts were to be published on 22 December 2009,

- the Member States were to report to the Commission on 22 March 2010.

But the European Commission notes serious delays: in several countries the compulsory consultations on the draft management plans are still going on and have not even started in some countries.

14 countries published all their management plans: France (12 districts), the United Kingdom (16), the Netherlands (4), Germany (10), Luxembourg (1), the Czech Republic (3), Slovakia (2), Austria (3), Italy (8), Bulgaria (4), Romania (11), Latvia (4), Finland (8), Sweden (5).

On the whole, 91 river basin districts out of 170 published their management plan but 4 countries did not yet begin the consultation process: Portugal, Greece, Cyprus and Malta.

As regards the others, the consultation is going on or is completed but the plans have not yet been published.

The plans for international districts were published for the Danube, the Rhine, the Elbe, the Ems, the Maas and the Scheldt.

The Commission is drafting an evaluation report on the management plans which will be published in 2012. We already note that the details, the methods used and the presentation of the management plans are very heterogeneous and this will make the aggregation of data and their analysis difficult.

The transposition deadlines expired on 16 January 2009 for the Groundwater Directive and on 26 November 2009 for the Floods Directive. Formal notices are being sent now for non compliance with the transposition deadline.

20 countries already received notices for non compliance regarding the WFD implementation!

To tackle Europe's water challenges, the Management Plans need to be visionary, abandoning too minimalist approaches and becoming guidelines for clearly defining the efforts to make...

Clearly, a significant percentage of water bodies will not reach good status in 2015. A survey shows that the percentage of water bodies achieving good status in 2015 could vary a lot, between 25% and 75%.

There are still a lot of uncertainties about the real efficiency of certain measures mainly on hydromorphology, groundwater, wetlands, etc.

Even for the measures recognized as efficient, there are uncertainties about the necessary time to carry out the projects in the field and the time necessary for the environments to react.

The time factor is indeed of prime importance and this requires urgent action.

The complete implementation of pre-existing "nitrates" and "wastewater" Directives must be at the core of the Programs of Measures.

True mobilization is needed concerning agriculture: the programs must include strong and constraining measures and actions must be coordinated at the European level. It will be very difficult to obtain positive results on the quality of water and ecosystems in 2015, and even in 2021, without a true reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

As the functional restoration of aquatic environments is of prime importance for achieving good status, the means devoted to wetlands and hydromorphology must be increased.

It is also urgent to reinforce protection measures for groundwater, to make for lost time, taking into account the fragility of aquifers and the time needed for restoring degraded situations.

It is also necessary to apply the "Renewable Energy" Directive and the "WFD" at the same time, as hydropower infrastructures change ecosystems, but produce renewable energy without greenhouse effect...!!!

- IN TRANSBOUNDARY BASINS, the positive role of international commissions, where they exist, was underlined, as platforms for international coordination, harmonization of practices, decision-making through consensus and prevention of conflicts, information exchange, etc... between riparian countries.

But huge work is still needed. Management Plans of International River Basin Districts in Europe still too often look like a patchwork of national elements, as each Member State remains responsible vis-à-vis the Commission for the WFD implementation.

In the same international district, the countries have not always the same priorities and deadlines, even practices for the same types of measures, especially in basins shared with non-EU countries.

As regards the Programs of Measures:

The countries now enter in an operational step which relies less on governmental procedures than on many local projects. In this respect, several recommendations can be given.

In a first step, the Programs of Measures should be detailed, not only at the large river or aquifer basin level, but also at the level of each sub-basin, to be consistent with the main orientations of the District Management Plan...Using this kind of details is a guarantee for future accomplishments and better appropriation by the groups concerned.

Practical implementation requires the involvement of municipalities, provinces, counties, departments, regions, which will be front-liners for the investments and operation of water utilities. These Local Authorities will play a major role in the practical implementation of the WFD with all the directly concerned economic partners (farmers, industrialists, fishermen, tourism, etc).

The combination of regulatory measures, financial provisions and contractual measures when drafting a Program of Measures will require significant and increased coordination between the various State services responsible for water management, basin organizations and local authorities, economic stakeholders and NGOs.

That is why the consultation process is not sufficient in itself to mobilize local stakeholders: the effective implementation of the Programs of Measures is conditioned to the recognition of their added value by the managers of the territories

It is also of utmost importance for State authorities to mobilize themselves not only at central level but also in the field: they must be the first involved, by enforcing basic measures, controlling the effective implementation of regulations, and accompanying local stakeholders in their projects.

With regard to the financing of programs:

The "WFD" gives a major role to the economic analysis which remains to be improved.

As the methods used are different from one country to another, especially in the international river basin districts, it is very important to exchange on criteria for effectiveness of measures, disproportionate cost, exemptions and extension of delays, impact on the water price.

The WFD implementation will have a huge cost and may represent an important additional financial effort - maybe up to +30 % in some districts - probably implying the same increase on the water price. It raises the question of acceptability by users, especially in a context of economic crisis. It is necessary to have real debates on the financing, even if discussions can be hard: Who will pay and how much?

The costs are likely to be very often higher than the financial resources that can be mobilized. We may define progressive objectives and spread the costs over two or three successive programs of measures, but, in several cases, it seems that the heaviest financing was remitted to the 2021-2017 period, which can be interpreted as remitting it until further notice and thus as a bad signal to the users and stakeholders.

We should give necessary explanations to the consumers but also to the decision-makers to make the stakes understandable and the increase in the water price acceptable.

Exemptions will be necessary, not only because of technical aspects, but also on account of financing capacities and the ability to pay of the population.

The objectives would only be reached when the corresponding financial mobilization is possible. It is thus recommended that the water pricing measures target the biggest water users, such as agriculture, and be designed to give incentives for more efficient consumption if we want that significant reductions in water use are achieved.

With regard to the citizens' participation:

We can draw some recommendations from the official public consultation on the draft management plans.

An "administrative" consultation should not be taken for a "popular" consultation of the general public, which calls upon cultural bases, images, signs of recognition and very specific media.

Moreover, tools must be adapted to the targeted public, geographical scale, consultation objectives and to the territory specificity, especially in the international districts.

Experience shows that original approaches, based on the local organization of events or on the use of local communication supports, are more effective for mobilizing the citizens than the use of the media for a wide dissemination, the cost of which is high, for a return which is sometimes disappointing.

It is necessary to take into account proximity and direct contact on the places of living. The passage by the relay of local authorities and NGOs appeared to be very useful.

In the international districts, common strategies for more public involvement should be reinforced, relying on international commissions and NGOs participation: It appears important to coordinate not only the consultation process and timetable, but also the content of the consultation processes, to develop a feeling of membership and identity on the whole transboundary basin scale.

Of course, these methods will have to be long-term ones and anticipate the improvement of other future consultations: a mechanism for consultation throughout the WFD implementation phase must be developed and applied; the process cannot just organize one consultation comparable to a media "shot".

These consultations will have a cost and it is necessary to plan for significant budgets to comply with the new obligations in this field.

It will be also of prime importance to make a success of the combined implementation of the WFD and European « groundwater », « floods » and « marine strategy » Directives

The Marine Strategy Directive has many common points with the WFD, in term of process and methods and in the definition of strong environmental goals. It is obvious that these 2 directives are complementary in coastal zones and the experience gained by basin organizations during the first WFD cycle will have to be made profitable for the implementation of the Marine Strategy Directive.

It is now advisable to promote a combination of the approaches of both directives on an operational scale. The basin organizations underline the significant benefit expected at the meetings of the directors of water and the sea at the level of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS). However, it will be necessary to plan for support on a river basin scale and to basin authorities which can sometimes encounter many difficulties: differences in terms of responsibilities, administrative organization, supervisory authorities, but also weak relationships with the interested parties specific to the marine environment for example. It will be of prime importance to develop exchanges and experience feedbacks between the basin organizations and the relevant authorities in order to guarantee synergy between these two directives.

The implementation of the “Floods” Directive should not lead to the selection of measures which aim, “in the short term” and often in an ineffective way, at reducing the risk or amplitude of damage, especially if they are in contradiction with achieving good status. Thus the extraction of granulates in rivers, justifying them by the improvement of the flow, is very debatable but also in complete contradiction with the “physical” component of the good ecological status given as objective by the WFD.

The evaluation of the physical component of “Good Status” undoubtedly requires to be developed in future years to have a more precise identification of the hydromorphological disturbances and possible remedial measures.

Adaptation of water management to climate change is needed; it will especially be necessary to develop strategies for risk and drought prevention in Europe.

Supposing that humanity can appreciably reduce tomorrow the emissions of greenhouse-effect gases, the harmful effects of climate change would nevertheless still continue to be felt for many decades.

Global warming now seems to be unavoidable. One of the first consequences will be a change in the hydrological cycles.

Should ambitious measures be globally taken by all the countries to appreciably reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases, the effect on climate would only be perceptible at best at the end of the century. Changes in rainfall and hydrological cycles have already started and will probably be felt by 2040 or 2050, i.e. in less than a generation: it is thus necessary to react quickly, before it is too late and it is clear that the sole control of gas emissions will be insufficient to alter this evolution within these deadlines.

It is therefore essential to work at adapting to the consequences of climate change and, in particular, with regard to basin organizations, at developing water resources management policies, taking into account the new elements of climate change. It is especially necessary to quickly assess the hydrological consequences of this change, according to various scenarios.

These effects combine with the significant pressures already associated with population growth, urbanization and development.

Global warming is a “multiplier of threats”, worsening difficult situations and increasing tensions, even in the most stable areas as Europe.

“If the greenhouse-effect gases are responsible for climate change, fresh water is the first victim”.

It is therefore essential to work now at adapting policies and mechanisms for managing water resources to cope with the effects of climate change. We must learn to anticipate the damage and take the necessary measures to prevent or at least minimize their negative effects, in short to adapt us!

“UPSTREAM-DOWNSTREAM COMMON CAUSE” SHOULD BE STRENGTHENED:

It is necessary to better recognize the role of mountains for the community as a whole and take it into account, within integrated basin policies, to manage the territories, ecosystems and mountain water resources, build the integrated infrastructures necessary upstream, for continuing to protect downstream areas against risks and provide the plains with abundant quality water, which they will increasingly need...

Now it is time to rethink the management of water and soils by integrating upstream the strategic constraints of water supply to the populations and agricultural, industrial and tourist economies at the foothills and in plains downstream, based on principles of common cause and upstream-downstream compensation.

Conservation and storage of water resources, development of slopes and lands to hold water during rainfall, management of plant and forest cover, protection of wetlands, development of protection areas..., the new regional planning policies will have to optimize the water reserves available for the community and to prevent natural hazards.

These measures will have an important cost and it will be necessary to develop institutional and financial mechanisms allowing the payment of the services rendered by the upper basins by their main downstream recipients.

It is especially crucial to develop studies to measure the real contribution of water to the economy and human development, in short to give a “monetary” value to water resources, to be able to establish the true cost / effectiveness assessment of their management.

Water management, which is still regarded by the International Authorities as a secondary sub-goal of sustainable development or of poverty alleviation and in our developed economies as a single component of environmental protection, must become a political priority in its own right, given the challenges it represents for the future of mankind.

It is also important to now learn managing risk and vulnerability!

Current uncertainty should not be a reason for inaction. Actions and research must be undertaken simultaneously and concurrently.

Adaptation must be “flexible” and the measures to be taken quickly must be “adaptable” to the new future conditions.

It is necessary to develop "win-win" strategies and to immediately launch programs of measures “with no regret”, whose implementation will be anyway required in all possible scenarios, since water is essential in almost all the sectors whose development depends on its availability and its quality. Planning must be made in the basins of large rivers and based on strong intersectoral cooperation and also international when river basins are transboundary.

But beyond conservation measures, it is undoubtedly the way of relating to our water consumption that will have to change to better control demand, be more economical and less polluting, to better preserve the aquatic ecosystems, etc.

Our societies will also have to accept some risk against the increased frequency and intensity of floods and droughts, against which it is not possible to achieve a "zero risk".

With the Water Framework Directive, the European Union has an advanced legal tool which must also be used to develop strategies for adapting water resources management to climate change.

Several Member States of the European Union are already developing such strategies: France, for example, has just launched a public consultation for its national Adaptation Plan. In 2011, a European Information Center on the effects of Climate Change should be created while the European Commission will propose in 2013 a Common Strategy, whose measures on water will have to be integrated into the next 2015-2021 Management Plans and Programs of Measures of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).

Addressing the consequences of climate change and scarcity of water resources and drought in particular is already a priority for the EU regional policy for the 2007-2013 period. The framework provides support for infrastructure investments related to water management (storage, supply, treatment), the development of clean technologies for efficient use of water as well as measures to prevent risks. It is still essential to make sure that the granting of funds is subordinated to prior proof of use of measures aiming at saving water and guaranteeing its sound use...

Cooperation between neighboring Countries, non EU members, should be developed and supported for applying the WFD principles and methods.

The WFD has the following characteristics:

- It provides a common operational framework (objectives, methods, deadlines, reference conditions, planning documents), with guidance documents prepared through the CIS (Common Implementation Strategy) process led by EU Water Directors and European Commission, as common base for implementation.
- It requires a series of steps very close to the principles of River basin management supported by INBO: initial characterization of river basin districts, development of monitoring, elaboration of management plans and programs of measures to

achieve good status for waters, public participation, principle of cost recovery, etc. A new approach of the WFD is the wide use of economic analysis (cost-effectiveness analysis, cost-benefit analysis...) to identify the most efficient scenarios and develop a common approach for exemptions and extension of delays.

- The progress achieved are particularly important for transboundary river basins, since the WFD explicitly requires delimiting international river basin districts and coordinating analysis of initial status, management plans, programs of measures and public participation between the concerned States. Among the 110 river basin districts established across the EU, 40 are international river basin districts and cover more than 60% of the EU territory, making international coordination one of the most significant issues and challenges for the WFD implementation.
- It requires all kinds of coordination, from bilateral cooperation to the involvement of 19 countries in the Danube International Commission. International Commissions act as platform for international coordination, supporting harmonization of practices, decision-making through consensus and prevention of conflicts, information exchange, improving upstream/downstream political and technical relationships, etc., between riparian countries.
- The WFD has been a driving force for the new Member States and is now a driving force for non-EU riparian countries (EECCA region), sharing a transboundary river basin with EU countries.

The WFD is a successful example of regional initiative which can inspire other areas in the world and, first of all, the Mediterranean non EU-countries, as it appears to be a factor for disseminating the principles of good governance.

Of course, the WFD cannot be exported as such as a regulatory tool, but its approach and principles are broadly transferable and adaptable, such as: characterization of initial status and development of monitoring, formulation of management plans and action plans at basin level, definition of deadlines and measurable objectives, common indicators and reference frames for data management, introduction of the cost recovery principle, participation of the interested parties and of the public...

Conclusion

Integrated and sound water resources management is more than ever an unquestionable priority, if we do not want this essential resource to become the limiting factor for sustainable development in many countries in Europe.

Organizing this management on a basin scale seems an effective solution as especially proven by the action taken at the European level with the WFD implementation.

Aware of the importance of the European and global stakes and of the urgency to act, the EUROPE-INBO group intends to continue its action, in particular by having an active participation in the European process of the next World Water Forum of 2012, especially on issues such as the WFD and daughter directives, UNECE convention on international rivers and adaptation to climate change.

The participants thanked Sweden and especially Mrs. **Ann-Louise MANSSON, Director of natural resources at the Swedish Ministry of the Environment and Mr. Bjorn SJOBERG, Director of the Lansstyrelsen Hydraulic District Authority**, for having taken with effectiveness the presidency of the EUROPE-INBO group during the year 2009/2010, since the last “EUROPE-INBO 2009” conference which was held in Stockholm in August 2009, within the Swedish Presidency of the European Union.

Mr. Laurent Fayein, President of the French Rhone, Mediterranean and Corsica Water Agency, was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO group for the coming year, until the next conference which will take place in Porto in Portugal in 2011.

The delegates thanked the Alpine Economic Company, the city of Mégève, **the UNESCO “Savoy, Annecy, Mont Blanc, Lemman” site** and the French Rhone, Mediterranean and Corsica Water Agency, for their excellent welcome and the perfect organization of this 8th Conference and designated Portugal as host country of the next Conference of the EUROPE-INBO group which will be held in Porto in autumn 2011.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED IN MEGEVE ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2010

The final Declaration and all the papers will be available on the web site:
www.inbo-news.org