Proposal for INBO workshop on

"Improving the coherence of water and biodiversity policies - from cities to basin"

Challenges of a changing climate

Concept Note – V10

September 2024

OFB OFFICE FRANÇAIS DE LA BIODIVERSITÉ

EURO RIOB

OiEau Office International de l'Eau

1. CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES

INBO's World General Assembly, an international event devoted to water management at the level of river basins throughout the world, will take place in Bordeaux, France, from 7 to 10 October 2024.

Within this context, the workshop organized on Monday 7 October, will be this year the opportunity **to encourage dialogue between European and worldwide stakeholders and water managers**, taking into account as far a possible the varied profiles of the participants (function, geography, expectations, etc.) as well as their **very heterogeneous knowledge of European and international policies and regulations**.

European policies will not be a central element of the workshop, but they can be discussed from the point of view of sharing experiences, feeding the dialogue between continents.

It will be important to ensure that there are reciprocal exchanges in which the experiences of stakeholders from different continents and catchment areas feed into the debates and open discussions. The case studies presented should also take into account the above points and facilitate discussion in sub-groups of participants.

This concept note sets out the context and objectives of this workshop, and proposes an initial agenda.

In an increasingly interconnected world, wherein global meets local, water remains the lifeblood of our socio-ecological systems, the vital resource supporting agriculture, energy, and other crucial sectors, meanwhile transcending national and regional boundaries.

Nevertheless, climate change and environmental degradation are putting pressure on this resource. **Climate change** is causing increasingly extreme and repeated weather events. Territories have been facing more frequent floods over the last 30 years[1]. Droughts are also occurring more frequently. By impacting water availability, climate change causes **water scarcity and water quality degradation**.

This climate crisis is coupled with the threat of **biodiversity loss** and the degradation of ecosystems around the globe. Freshwater ecosystems are the most vulnerable to climate change, and numerous species depend on them for habitat, food and reproduction.

Tackling these crises requires coordinated and global efforts, but also local actions, and call for integrated and sustainable solutions. The objectives of the **water and biodiversity policies** (e.g. Water Framework Directive, the Green Deal, the Sustainable Development Goals…) –

[1] Günter Blöschl et al.: Current European flood-rich period exceptional compared with past 500 years. Nature, No. 583, July 22, 2020. Doi: 10.1038 / s41586-020-2478-3.

tackling water pollution, curtailing biodiversity loss, and strengthening resilience to climate change impacts – are therefore as relevant as ever.

Many of the global challenges, such as climate change, increased resource demand and competition between different water users require cross-sectorial cooperation. This can be achieved through a sound **governance**, which also implies taking into account **scale-related challenges**. Planning and implementation sometimes operate at different space and timeframes over sectors: political boundaries may not align with river basin districts, leading to challenges in governance and decision-making. This can create difficulties in coordinating management efforts across different administrative levels and may affect the distribution of responsibilities and resources[2].

The ecological scale, i.e. the scale of environmental processes, can also be at odds with the scale at which management measures are implemented. Political schedules such as election cycles do not align with the longer timeframe needed for ecosystems to restore themselves and start producing benefits again. Furthermore, ecosystems services, such as improved flood protection, can transcend administrative boundaries.

Efficient water and biodiversity management across administrative boundaries and sectors also implies **stakeholder engagement** involving institutional actors, representatives of civil society and citizens.

The effective **implementation** of water and biodiversity policies and strategies requires the mobilization and deployment of traditional and green infrastructure at different scales.

Amongst these measures are **Nature Based Solutions**, which the IUCN defines as "actions to protect, sustainably manage and restore natural and modified ecosystems in ways that address societal challenges effectively and adaptively, to provide both human well-being and biodiversity benefits"[3]. With their focus on systemic thinking and adaptability, NBS have the potential to address a broad range of challenges, while supporting integrative approaches linking basins to their connected localities.

Financing the measures is also a crucial point. The use of financing mechanisms such as downstream users compensating upstream stakeholders for activities that support ecosystem services can be a way to connect basins and cities to protect water resources and biodiversity. Payments for Ecosystem Services (PES) are promising tools to this end.

[2] Pahl-Wostl et al., 2021. *Scale-related governance challenges in the water-energy-food nexus: Toward a diagnostic approach*. Sustainability Science. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-020-00888-6

[3] Cohen-Shacham, E., Walters, G., Janzen, C. and Maginnis, S. (eds.) (2016). Nature-based Solutions to address global societal challenges. Gland,
Switzerland: IUCN. xiii + 97pp.

Central questions to be addressed are therefore: How can we improve the coherence of water and biodiversity policies? How can they be sustainably and effectively implemented at different levels? How can governance be a key element for success?
What tools and practices exist, and what can we learn from them?

If some challenges are common between countries, each has its own hydro-climate and governance framework, as well as specific issues to address when implementing water and biodiversity policies.

This is why, for the 2024 INBO conference, it is proposed to organize a workshop on **"Improving the coherence of water and biodiversity policies".** The governance and technical sides of policies implementation will be discussed, with river basin management as a common tool to address challenges at the local level, in a changing climate.

2. CONTENTS

The workshop will offer an overview of challenges and feedbacks related to the implementation of water and biodiversity policies from cities to basin level. It will encourage exchanges of experiences and points of view on constraints and solutions implemented around the world.

2.1 Workshop format

Firstly, an introduction will set the scene on the political context, the current stakes and shared observations.

Then, two themes will be investigated during a workshop period including feedbacks from different countries, basin organisations and research projects. In order to give as much room for interactions as possible, this part of the workshop will be organised in short split group sessions.

For each session in split groups, facilitators will foster participation and exchanges between participants and prepare the restitution of the workshop's outcomes.

A report on outcomes of the workshop will be prepared, sent to the participants and published on the INBO website: https://www.riob.org/fr

2.2 Draft agenda of the workshop

AGENDA - 7th October 2024 Bordeaux		
Timings	**Contents**	**Speaker**
14:00 - 14:45	**Introduction**	
	5': Introduction	INBO Secretariat
	15': Water and biodiversity policies in Europe and elsewhere. What's at stake?	Luca PEREZ - DG ENV
	10': Importance and challenges of the implementation of water and biodiversity policies	Emmanuel DIDON - OFB Nouvelle-Aquitaine Regional Division
	15': Implementation of the water and biodiversity policies at local level: an example xx	Franck SOLACROUP – Syndicat mixte d'Etudes et d'Amenagement de la Garonne (SMEAG)
14:45 - 15:50	**Working session # 1 – Water and biodiversity governance: WHO?** Aim: *sharing experiences on what kind of stakeholders (different sectors, management levels, scales, types of stakeholders (private, public, citizens, research…)) are involved in water and biodiversity management, how they are organized, what are their roles, skills, responsibilities*	
	Introduction (5') - Plenary room	INBO
	Case studies (2 x 10 min) -Europe -Worldwide	-Andrew Mc CONVILLE – Murray-Darling Basin Authority (Australia) -Victor CIFUENTES - Guadalquivir River Basin Authority (Spain)
	Discussion (in English) – 30 min	
	Transition	INBO
15:50 – 16:10	**Break**	
16:10 - 17:15	**Working session # 2 – Implementing water and biodiversity policies: HOW?** Aim: *sharing experiences on what kind of measures linking water and biodiversity are implemented, how, what subsidies*	

	Introduction (5') - Plenary room	All
	Case studies (2 x 10 min) -Europe -Worldwide	-Alessandro BRATTI - River Po Basin District Authority (Italy) -Juan José OCOLA SALAZAR - Binational Autonomous Authority of Lake Titicaca (Bolivia)
	Discussion (in English) – 30 min	
	Conclusion of the working session (5')	All
17:15 17:30	**Conclusion: INBO**	

2.3 Participants

The contents of the workshop will not be too scientific nor technically focused as the INBO's audience is made of a variety of profiles, such as river basin policy makers and managers.

Thus, the profiles for this workshop are those of "generalist field managers", involved in water management planning or decision-making process. No high-level technical profile is required given that the exchanges are not sought to be at a too technical level.

Participants have to register for the workshop.