

Round Table 3: Institutional framework for action of basin organizations, participation of local authorities, water users and the public, role of the basin committees

**Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear Water Friends and colleagues,**

It is a great pleasure for me to be here together with all of you in this interesting and important conference. This topic is very close to my daily work and experience as I am a Director of East Aegean River Basin Directorate in Bulgaria (an organization responsible for river basin management) and a President of Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organizations (CEENBO).

Bulgaria is a member of EU since 2007 and even before that we follow all the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and the EU water legislation. Regarding the requirements of the directive we have to develop each 6 year River basin management plan. It is needed in each step of planning to organize public consultation and to encourage public and stakeholders active to involve. We have already an experience as the first River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) 2010-2015 are fact and now we started preparation of the second RBMP 2016-2021. At the same time we work as most of the European countries on the development of the first Flood Risk Management Plan under the requirements of the European Flood risk directive.

I could say that during the first water management cycle we gained significant experience and capacity building with the support of the 2 EU institutionnal Twinning with French institutions, which have a significant practice from long time in river basin planning and management, public participation and work of the basin committee. The first twinning helped us to establish river basin management and competent authorities in Bulgaria. The second twinning was connected with the development of the River basin management plan in context of European water framework directive. It helped us very much successfully to finalize the process of creation of the plan,

especially program of measures, including economical aspects, public consultation of the draft river basin management plan and reporting the results to European commission.

We learned many lessons that will help us to improve our second planning cycle, public consultation process and finally water management at basin level.

In my opinion in this planning process a key is the role of public participation and active involvement of stakeholders.

Our experience learned us that it is very important to start this consultation as early as we could. Involvement of stakeholders and large public is important if we want to reach sustainable results and some kind of a balance between different groups and interests.

First key: One of our most useful lessons was associated with the need to meet the maximum number of stakeholders.

During the public consultations we used different methods of consultation: leaflets, questionnaires, sending letters with information, CDs, media, local meetings, ext. In our work we understand that the most effective way is local meetings with stakeholders. During the meetings first we present our work and point of view and after that we use different interactive methods to give possibilities to the participants to share their point of view and knowledge about local problems or proposals for measures. Step by step through several meetings we started to understand better each other, to know each other and to thrust each other. Finally it leads to improving communication and coordination.

After establishment of the first RBMP we faced to other problem – implementation of measures. There are a lot of problems in this area but I will focus of the key one – stakeholders. Implementation of measures depends of will and understanding of stakeholders.

So, it is essentially as early as we are prepared to start communication with stakeholders, they to be aware what they have to do in the next years and of course to reach as many stakeholders as we could.

With idea to reach to more people we started to look for more modern communication tools and we created a facebook profile of the Basin directorate. There we started to share information, photos, opinions in more informal way. Through this way many young people joined to us and became our friends. This year we created also Twitter account where daily publish information about events and news.

Second key: Work with young people is essential in long term to change habits and sensitivity of society to water problems.

We have a lot of events with young people as open lessons, happenings, excursions, round tables, discussions and ext. The last years, our river basin authority started development of national network "Youth Water Parliament" with support of our friends Artois – Picardie water Agency in France. Nowadays this organization is fact. It is part of the European and world network, established during the World Water Forum in Marseille and it is grows permanently with new members.

We plan to involve young people, as future stakeholders, more active in public consultation process during the second RBMP planning process and development of the FRMP. This year during the public consultation meetings with stakeholders, we organized parallel meetings with young people from local schools with the same topics. We conducted a total of 5 meetings and were attended by over 200 students and their teachers. We think that the meetings were very successful. We organize them thinking that the young participants now will be future stakeholders when next RBMP will be in implementation. We expect through this way to improve sensitivity in young people and in future as a part of society they to be more involved and active.

Third key: We are aware of importance of Basin council as an engine to involve stakeholders in integrated water management at basin level.

For each river basin district in Bulgaria there are a Basin Council, which is a state advisory committee which supports the activities of the RBD. The Basin Council consists of representatives of state administration, municipalities, environmental organizations (NGOs), water users and scientific institutes with certain quotas. The Basin council play a key role in river basin management and support sharing of information, understanding of issues, balance of interests.

After 10 years experience we understand that to improve the role of the Basin committee it is important to involve the key stakeholders in it and to improve the composition of the Basin Council. For example, at the beginig Basin Council members were representatives of individual companies or organizations, but they are too many at river basin district level. This year we updated the list of members of the Basin Council and applied a new approach. Representatives of water users are representatives of branch organizations and regional and national associations of the big water users from industry, agriculture, etc. For the selection of local authorities we apply geographical approach and selected representatives of the municipalities from all main river basins and association of the municipalities at regional level. Through this approach we expect to improve coordination and mobilization in implementation of measures in future.

Thank you for your attention!