



**RESEAU INTERNATIONAL DES ORGANISMES DE BASSIN  
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS  
RED INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANISMOS DE CUENCA**



*With the financial and technical support of:*



**European Group of Basin Organizations  
East Aegean Basin Directorate**

**"EUROPE-INBO 2013"  
11<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE**

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**Plovdiv, Bulgaria  
13 – 16 November 2013  
Imperial Park Hotel**

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**"EUROPE-INBO DECLARATION OF PLOVDIV"  
Draft Version 8  
FINAL WORKING DOCUMENT**

The 11th conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group, which was held in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, from 13 to 16 November 2013, at the invitation of the East Aegean Directorate of the Bulgarian Ministry of the Environment and Water, gathered 183 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as NGOs, companies and international and regional organizations from 21 Countries (list of countries in the Annex).

The "EUROPE-INBO" group, created in Valencia, Spain, in 2003 by the European Basin Organizations of INBO for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), aims at enriching the implementation of water policies in Europe, including the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS), through their practical experience for supporting the Candidate Countries and disseminating the principles and tools of the European water

directives, especially to the EU neighbouring countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and in the Mediterranean.

Within INBO, the Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organizations (CEENBO), the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO), and the new Network of Basin Organizations of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA - NBO), facilitate in their own region exchanges of experience and discussions on basin management in an enlarged European context.

The "EUROPE-INBO" group holds annual plenary assemblies: Valencia (Spain) in 2003, Krakow (Poland) in 2004, Namur (Belgium) in 2005, Megève (France) in 2006, Rome (Italy) in 2007, Sibiu (Romania) in 2008, Stockholm (Sweden) in 2009, Megève (France) in 2010 and Oporto (Portugal) in 2011, Istanbul (Turkey) in 2012.

Prior to the EUROPE-INBO conference, a technical workshop was held for practitioners, decision-makers, and members of the EUROPE-INBO group. This workshop, focusing on the issue of the monitoring programme, was designed to foster the exchange of experiences and practices in this matter. The recommendations were presented during the conference. It mainly outlined monitoring as a major tool for water policy that is relatively little expensive with regard to its added value. The participants highlighted the importance of coordinating and financing from public funds the monitoring programmes as a guarantee of sustainability and reliability. Finally, the participants insisted on the usefulness of developing interpretive tools to better communicate with decision-makers and the general public on the basis of these data.

The 11th "EUROPE-INBO 2013" international conference in Plovdiv was organized around five successive round tables addressing the following issues:

- Feedback from the first RBMP (2010-2015). Preparation of the Second RBMP (2016-2021). Better coherence between the level of pressures and the Programmes of Measures, integration of water quantity issues (resource allocation, drought and flood management). Adaptation to climate change. Better coordination between the EU directives. (Flood and Marine strategy, Habitats, fauna and flora) and the link with other sectoral policies (agriculture, energy, hydropower, navigation...) Better involvement of field water stakeholders.
- Funding of programmes of measures, Access to Funds and particularly to EU Structural Funds. Economic analyses for determining the most cost effective combination of measures. Value of ecological services. Principle of cost recovery.
- New approaches of river and aquifer restoration. Natural water retention measures. Ecological flow. Ecological focus areas. Reduction of Agricultural impacts on water (buffer strips, changes in agricultural practices etc.).
- Water governance in transboundary basins. WFD international districts. Role and meanings of International commissions. Bi and Multilateral agreements and Conventions.
- Implementation of WFD principles in EU Neighbouring countries. Experiences of EECCA and Mediterranean Partner countries.

It should be reminded that for INBO members the term "basin" includes the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers.

38 papers were presented during the conference.

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.

## Overall recommendations

The participants positively welcomed the will expressed by the European Commission of greater involvement of basin authorities in the activities of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) of the European Water Framework Directive, as shown in the 2013-2015 work programme adopted by the Water Directors in 2013 in Dublin under the Irish presidency. Exchanges among peers and more generally all forms of exchanges between basin organizations (thematic workshops, working groups, networks of pilot basins, etc) have been one of the purposes of INBO and of its associated regional networks since their creation. The EUROPE-INBO group, CEENBO and MENBO therefore support this initiative and stress their willingness to contribute in the future years, especially through the organization of a real European network of basin authorities responsible within the CIS of best practices and issues raised by them.

**1- Feedback from the first RBMP (2010-2015). Preparation of the Second RBMP (2016-2021). Better coherence between the level of pressures and the Programmes of Measures, integration of water quantity issues (resource allocation, drought and flood management). Adaptation to climate change. Better coordination between the EU directives. (Flood and Marine strategy, Habitats, fauna and flora) and the link with other sectoral policies (agriculture, energy, hydropower, navigation...) Better involvement of field water stakeholders.**

Basin management is the most appropriate way to manage water resources, leading to greater consistency between the different sectors, particularly between water, energy, agriculture and food, and to make a better integration between land management and the management of water resources in order to cope with present and future challenges, including those related to global change.

Despite the progress made, the WFD, which resolutely adopted this approach at the European Union level, still has to improve its relationship with the other directives such as the Directive on urban wastewater, the Directives on "Nitrates", "Drinking Water", "Groundwater", "Bathing water", "Floods", "Marine Strategy Framework Directive", "Environmental Quality Standards". This coordination is becoming necessary when management cycles tend to be implemented at the same time, especially for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Floods Directive and the WFD. It is imperative that issues related to floods, droughts, adaptation to climate change be addressed in future management plans. Consistency between management plans and urban planning or land use documents must be sought for as land use is an important factor with an impact on water.

Similarly, coordination between different administrative services, sometimes in different Ministries, that implement these directives should be increased, such as the services which manage floods and drought plans and those directly responsible for the WFD implementation. This coordination also applies to quantitative issues vs qualitative aspects, the services in charge of these matters being often different, while the quantitative and qualitative aspects are interdependent. It is also necessary to better involve local authorities and field stakeholders who are in charge of the practical implementation of the water directives.

Through the "Blueprint" which was adopted in November 2012 and is a new strategy to achieve the WFD goals, the European Commission established a framework on the prospects for the European water policy.

In this regard, the participants received with great interest the presentation of Mr. Peter Gammeltoft, Head of the Water Unit at the Directorate for Quality of Life, Water, Air of the European Commission.

Noting, at completion of the assessment of river basin management plans, that 47% of water bodies in the EU would not reach the good status target in 2015, and this despite a well-developed European legislative framework, future work will have to be organized around three axes:

- Improving the implementation of the Directive: regulations complemented by other directives are established, but their implementation should be strengthened, e.g. around actions under the prevention of pollution by nitrates coming from agriculture, or investments in domestic wastewater treatment or environmental authorizations in the industry;
- Achieving better integration between directives and between sectors: thus, the WFD objectives should be better incorporated into other EU policies (including CAP, industry, energy, transport). For example, as part of the CAP reform, the development of green natural infrastructure such as restoration of wetlands, the establishment of buffer zones, preservation of floodplains should be promoted;
- Filling some gaps, for example through increased means for inspection and control of abstractions, support to innovation in water management, carrying out actions to facilitate the reuse of wastewater as well as the definition of standards at European level, based on the best available techniques at an acceptable economic cost.

Other actions such as widespread use of water metering, a methodology for cost recovery, including environmental costs, can support a better implementation of EU legislation.

The participants confirmed that given the experience gained in river basins, the proposals of the Blueprint and their translation into the new CIS programme are appropriate ways for better implementation of the WFD for achieving good water status.

In general, the representatives want progress to be achieved in the upward harmonization of national practices. This harmonization does not mean the application of unique European standards, but refers to a toolbox based on best experiences and clearly identified "success stories". To have national authorities benefit from their experience in this field, they propose that exchanges between peers be organized.

They noted that heterogeneity in the definition of water bodies raises a problem, those having too small sizes are not operating entities, thus, while the initial status of these micro water bodies with no measuring station has been determined by extrapolation, what about the monitoring and checking of the good status?

The presentations highlighted the opportunities for improvement of practices to develop the link between the identification of pressures affecting the water bodies and the appropriate measures to be taken.

Indeed, due to the time lag in the first cycle for establishing reference conditions and defining good status and the need to simultaneously develop programmes of measures - the logical link between pressures and measures was not evident in many RBMP. The assessment of the previous reporting cycle demonstrates that it is essential to prioritize pressures and identify the sectors responsible for the significant pressures, in order to better design the Programme of Measures and foster intersectoral integration. This situation needs to be rectified in the second cycle. In many cases it offers an opportunity to rationalize and simplify national legislation and to ensure that efforts are focussed on the most pressing water issues.

The participants also emphasized the importance of identifying appropriate means and an adapted communication strategy to demonstrate the considerable efforts already made in the first management plans and early results. Information from WISE can be highly useful in this regard.

In this regard, we should keep in mind that the period of recovery of aquatic ecosystems and groundwater (several decades) is incommensurate with the duration of a basin management plan.

Regarding water bodies status assessment, it is proposed to ensure the identification of Quality elements/chemical substances, etc... causing failure of achieving the objectives, so that the presentation of overall status can be complemented, to the extent that data are available, by a presentation of individual parameters.

The participants therefore wished that the "one out all out" or "limiting factor" principle be developed through sub-indicators so that the citizens and their elected representatives may testify of the results of the WFD implementation and accompanying efforts. In this regard, they reminded that some disqualifying parameters are difficult to control in the context of a water policy because they are linked to other areas (e.g. air pollution).

## **2- Funding of programmes of measures, Access to Funds and particularly to EU Structural Funds. Economic analyses for determining the most cost effective combination of measures. Value of ecological services. Principle of cost recovery.**

As shown in the assessment of first RBMPs cycle, the link between economic analysis and decision making is still weak. Therefore the participants welcome the establishment at EU level within the CIS of a participatory process to develop further guidance on the economic analysis that should help providing more practical examples and solutions.

In particular the assessment of the environmental and resource costs (ERC) in the context of the cost-recovery analysis is still a major issue for Member States and requires clarification of the operational methodological elements or examples. The assessment and quantification of the benefits expected from improved water status are also seen as major challenges as well as taking into account the valuation of environmental services.

Therefore, basin authorities expressed the urgent need of additional guidance on these topics that can be effectively be used for the 2nd RBMP cycle.

### **The participants underlined:**

- that scarcity of water as well as its excess or degradation of its quality may affect development in some sectors, that these problems are exacerbated by climate change;
- and that, conversely, to face this challenge can be a source of competitiveness and jobs creation through green growth, resource saving, in agriculture, industry and communities, as it has been developed in directives other than the WFD (IED, etc);.
- that it is thus futile to oppose economic growth and good water management through principles given by the WFD. Moreover, it is interesting in this regard to assess the impact in terms of job creation when programmes of measures are implemented
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### **They also underlined:**

- that some kind of supports to certain economic sectors, such as agriculture, energy, transport or regional development can have adverse effects on the achievement of good water status and thus must be done in a manner consistent with the environmental objectives;
- that the correct application of the "polluter pays" and "water pays for water" principles can facilitate the achievement of the Good Water Status, by giving a clear price signal to users, while generating the necessary financing for restoration projects;
- that we need to share initiatives and practices that allow solidarity between citizens and local authorities to make water and sanitation services accessible to everyone,
- that the price signal must be complemented with relevant regulations, that are the only ones able to prevent further degradations.

The participants considered that other well designed sectoral policies can create opportunities for promoting the achievement of Good Water Status. They thus requested that water policies may be better integrated with other sectoral policies and benefit from their leverage, while relying on appropriate and controlled regulations.

### **3- New approaches of river and aquifer restoration. Natural water retention measures. Ecological flow. Ecological focus areas. Reduction of Agricultural impacts on water (buffer strips, changes in agricultural practices etc.).**

The participants noted that damage to the hydro-morphology of rivers, due to their recalibration, their containment or fragmentation and non-point source pollution, particularly related to land use, hydropower and agricultural practices, are the main causes of risk of not achieving good status for a large majority of Member States. Presentations also reminded that hydrology is an essential parameter for the preservation of aquatic environments and good ecological status.

Despite efforts over the past decade or so (in response to environmental directives) there has been a continued deterioration of valuable habitats. This is not necessarily due to how this legislation is implemented in Member States; rather it is a reflection of the difficulties of overcoming one or more of the barriers to its implementation.

Traditional drivers of river restoration arise from European and National legislation and policy relating to nature conservation; fisheries management; flooding and flood risk management; landscape and different projects of private developers and individuals. The majority of river restoration projects undertaken to date have generally involved non-complex land ownership issues and are restricted in the main to single sites.

Generally these are projects primarily driven by a single piece of legislation or policy. More recently policy shifts have occurred, requiring more holistic and integrated larger-scale restoration. Drivers include floods in Europe over the past decade leading to a view to the use of floodplains for natural storage and groundwater recharge; improvement to water quality and morphological status; and improved and more extensive agri-environmental schemes.

A number of good practice examples of projects which have overcome barriers and constraints are emerging. The RESTORE project provides examples of opportunities for river restoration which may have wider applicability across Europe.

Many barriers can be overcome through effective participation of stakeholders and by adopting effective approaches to implementation. The success of restoration projects is based on good project management and coordination skills of individuals. There are some residual constraints, including the need to build capacity of individuals and organizations as the demand for projects increases at a rapid rate.

The participants also favourably welcomed the initiative launched by DG Environment, European Commission, on Integration of natural water retention measures in river basin management. Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) are measures that aim to safeguard and enhance the water storage potential of landscape, soils and aquifers, by restoring ecosystems, natural features and characteristics of water courses, and by using natural processes. They are Green Infrastructure solutions and they support adaptation reducing vulnerability of water resources. There is currently a real need of exchanges on constraints, difficulties, factors for success that are relevant to the design and implementation of NWRM. The initiative will provide by October 2014 a web based knowledge on NWRM embedded into four regional networks (Danube, Mediterranean Sea region, Northern Europe and Western Europe)

**The participants underlined:**

- that flood prevention can be achieved by taking into account and even relying on the natural functionalities of rivers and wetlands;
- that the control and follow-up of abstractions and, in particular, the search for optimal use of water resources, can make water withdrawals compatible with the maintenance of a minimum acceptable environmental flow ensuring the preservation of aquatic environments;
- that organized agriculture practices can reduce its impact in terms of non-point source pollution to watercourses, lakes and aquifers.

**They requested**

- that flood management plans include the functioning of aquatic ecosystems in the solutions and proposed developments and favour the use of wetlands and natural flooded areas compatible for controlling or slowing down flood dynamics (green infrastructure);
- that public policies, that may affect or aim for river preservation or restoration, recommend actions to preserve or restore the riverside areas of watercourses through buffer strips, mobility areas, flood retention areas;
- that monitoring and control of abstractions are introduced and that their management takes into account the ecological minimum flows to be maintained in the rivers and its ecosystem;
- that the determination of environmental flows require more work at the European level, etc.

**In addition it is very important to ensure compliance of land planning documents and development plans with the provisions of the River Basin Management Plans.**

**4- Water governance in transboundary basins. WFD international districts. Role and meanings of International commissions. Bi and Multilateral agreements and Conventions.**

Noting that 60% of EU territory is located in transboundary river basins, the participants:

- Underlined that International Commissions have an important role in the WFD implementation, that much of their work and their working groups must be able to enrol in a European rationale,
- Recognized the important work produced by these institutions, and call for further support to these Commissions as the economic crisis generates a temptation to save money on this aspect.
- Whished, for purpose of increased efficiency, that, where relevant, the work of the Commissions be pooled with and complementary to the work of the European CIS (Common Strategy implementation) for better WFD implementation and policy convergence in transboundary districts.

Water Governance in transboundary basins must be improved especially in international districts established for WFD implementation, which involves cooperation agreements signed between riparian countries to create the conditions for an appropriate governance based on the establishment of mutual trust, a common understanding of the problems of the basin based on available and shared accurate data and analysis and with stakeholder involvement. The role and means of international commissions for transboundary rivers should be strengthened to ensure effective WFD implementation in EU countries.

## **5- Implementation of WFD principles in EU Neighbouring countries. Experiences of EECCA and Mediterranean Partner countries**

The experience gained in the European Union with the implementation of the WFD and other EU water directives and the tools developed for their implementation interest not only Candidate Countries, but also other Partner Countries of the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and the Mediterranean, which could consider their adaptation to their institutional, geo-climatic and socio-economic contexts, as part of cooperation which must be increased.

In addition, some transboundary water bodies and "WFD International Districts" are shared with neighbouring countries not members of the European Union: Specific cooperation should be continued and expanded among all the riparian countries of each basin.

In particular, this cooperation should prioritize dialogue and management of transboundary surface water or groundwater with the support of regional institutions, the strengthening of national information systems and their harmonization with international reporting mechanisms, the training of managers or planners of water resources and the participation of users, local authorities and associations.

The EU and Member States should also maintain a high level of financial support for common cause with the Southern countries and support the development of solidarity funding for access to water services.

## **6- Participation:**

The participants reminded that the involvement of stakeholders and of the public is crucial for improving water resources management, and their prior information and participation in decision-making processes should be further developed. Appropriation by all users of water-related policies and of the resulting measures is essential to progress and increase efficiency.

The "blue passport" can also help develop a sense of belonging to the basin and increase the legitimacy of citizen action.

Special attention should be paid to the involvement of youth in water governance. Hence, the participants supported initiatives such as youth parliaments for water at basin level.

## **7- Science- Managers- Decision-makers Interface**

Recognizing that one of the keys to achieving Good Status is the implementation of innovative solutions, through strengthened dialogue between managers, researchers and companies, the EUROPE-INBO members welcome being associated with the work of the Water Pipp (Public innovative Procurement Policies) project to promote and support innovation in public procurement.

The "EUROPE-INBO 2013" conference is an important new step not only to review the implementation of the first cycle of river basin management plans, but also to formulate sound proposals to improve WFD implementation in the next cycles, especially for the 2015-2021 period. The recommendations are also intended to feed the preparatory work of the 7th World Water Forum, which began in May 2013.

It is also an opportunity to practice a new type of workshop in EUROPE-INBO to share technical experience and formulate practical recommendations to be reproduced and sustained.



The participants thanked Turkey, and especially Pr. Ahmet Mete SAATCI (Turkey), for having fulfilled with determination and success the Presidency of EUROPE-INBO group during the year 2012/2013.

Mr. Nikola KARNOLSKI, Director of the East Aegean Basin Directorate was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO Group for the coming year until the next conference to be held in 2014. Mr. Jean SCHEPMAN, President of the International Affairs Committee of the Water Agency Artois Picardie (France) was elected Vice President.

The delegates gratefully accepted the proposal of the Romanian Authorities to organize the “EUROPE-INBO 2014” international conference in Romania.

They also took note of the proposal of the Greek Authorities to organize the “EUROPE-INBO 2014” conference in Greece.

The Delegates thanked the Bulgarian Authorities for their excellent hospitality and for the perfect organization of this 11th Conference.

**APPROVED IN PLOVDIV ON 15 NOVEMBER 2013**

The Final Declaration, photographs and all papers are published on the website:

**[www.inbo-news.org](http://www.inbo-news.org)**