



## Information note to the Strategic Coordination Group

### Activities of INBO European Networks in 2014



#### 1. Context and objectives

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 and the CIS works, through analyses directly resulting from the interested parties in the field.

Indeed 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, making specific proposals for the WFD implementation, and disseminating the principles and tools of the European water directives to the EU neighbouring countries

After Valencia (Spain) in 2003, the "EUROPE-INBO" group held annual plenary assemblies: 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, Oporto (Portugal) in 2011, Istanbul (Turkey) in 2012 and Plovdiv (Bulgaria) in 2013...

As part of these activities and in the context of preparation of the second WFD river basin management plans, a thematic workshop has been organized in Plovdiv, Bulgaria on 13 November 2013 back to back with the yearly EUROPE-INBO conference (14 and 15 November 2013). This workshop, dedicated to monitoring, has attracted 78 participants with 16 countries represented including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Ireland, Sweden, the United Kingdom and with distance participation of the European Commission and the European Environment Agency. Three main issues had been identified for the debates: the purpose of monitoring programs, the organization and the roles of actors, and the monitoring strategies. The outputs will be briefly presented to the SCG and ad-hoc Thematic Groups.

The Commission, in the 2012 Blueprint expressed the interest to better involve the RBDs in the CIS works. *A voluntary peer-review mechanism, through which river basin district authorities could submit their draft RBMPs to the review by other district authorities, has been further proposed; other complementary mechanisms to foster best practices between peers might also be explored.*

In this context, the EUROPE-INBO Group is proposing to extend the network to involve most of the River Basin Authorities and Districts Competent authorities responsible for the implementation of the WFD, and to develop the activities in order to strengthen mutual learning and sharing information between RBDs/MS about WFD implementation and river basin management planning.

The ultimate goal would be:

- to enable "horizontal" quick exchange of best practices by connecting people from different RBDs throughout Europe working on the same themes related to the implementation of the WFD;
- to strengthen the "vertical" communication between decision makers at European level and field practitioners from River Basin Authorities.

This networking process could be considered as a first step or a contribution to the peer-review mechanism. As already announced during the last SCG meetings, the European Networks of INBO are ready to propose their services for implementing the peer-review mechanism, on the basis of their experience as EUROPE-INBO Group, CEENBO (Central and Eastern Europe Network of Basin Organizations) and MENBO (Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations).

## 2. General functioning of the Network

### Easing contacts and networking

In order to ease contacts between interested members, the first step is to develop and establish a River Basin Authorities database, with identification of contacts by main fields of competencies and interests.

Obviously and referring to the WFD - Article 3.8 (stating that "Member States shall provide the Commission with a list of their competent authorities") the list of RBDs competent authorities is providing a strong basis. However, this could be usefully complemented by the identification of other River Basin Authorities and **relevant contacts related to various work areas**.

Referencing this database will be done by the EUROPE-INBO Secretariat and contacts will, of course, be integrated on a voluntary basis.

### Organizing technical exchanges on selected topics

Based on the past experiences and in order to develop a frame to the network activities, EUROPE-INBO would like to propose organising the exchanges in 2014 around two topics which appear as important issues in the context of implementing PoMs and preparing the second RBMPs :

- **Communication on Monitoring results**

The dedicated Monitoring workshop in 2013 was an opportunity to share the strategies and practicalities of monitoring in the context of WFD and the influence it could have on the implementation and monitoring of programs of measures. Taking stocks of those previous exchanges and the interest expressed by participants, it is proposed to extend the exchanges by focusing on the way to use the monitoring results to better link pressures and measures, and to identify best ways to communicate the results to the decision-makers and the public.

- **River restoration extended to Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) : how to help WFD implementation with better integration of European directives and better integrated catchment approaches?**

With regards to the WFD, the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water has shown that diffuse pollution and hydromorphology are significant pressures affecting rivers. Therefore, more efforts have to be implemented to address these pressures in order to reach ecological good status of water bodies. One way forward is to better design the measures through integrated application of European directives such as Common Agriculture Policy, WFD, Flood directive, Habitat directive and renewable energy directive. In that sense, there is also an increasing policy interest in the so-called Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) for improving water status on hydromorphology and diffuse pollution, thanks to the works undertaken in the CIS 2013-2015 and the NWRM related service contract for the COM.

Therefore EUROPE-INBO's conference presents a great opportunity to mobilize river basin authorities and managers on river restoration and NWRM, It would be complementary to ECRR and other networks activities and jointly developed, with a view to increase awareness on these approaches, highlight their multiple benefits and links with other directives.. Participants will also exchange experiences on how to communicate on river restoration and NWRM implementation / benefits and how to mobilize stakeholders who could be involved in projects actual implementation.

These two themes are proposed to be studied in 2014 in links with the CIS activities. Some others may be identified and planned later on, and the SCG members are invited to propose additional subjects they would like to be covered in the next activities.

In any case the topics selected will be addressed notably on the occasion of dedicated workshops within the EUROPE-INBO yearly conference, and the results presented to the SCG or relevant CIS working groups later on. The EUROPE-INBO secretariat will liaise with the relevant CIS working

groups when necessary, in order to make sure that no overlaps occurred and potential interest of working groups' members are identified.

### Dematerialized exchanges

In addition to workshops and in order to reduce the costs incurred by travels, we propose to develop electronic platforms to ease communication between network members:

- E-forum: this moderated and facilitated electronic platform will provide an opportunity for network members to discuss specific topics addressed by a facilitator. The e-forum discussion list works like an email discussion list: register email address with the list, and then receive messages and communicate with other participants through an email discussion. Once subscribed, members can access all previous e-forum contributions by searching the archives;
- A newsletter will keep the network members up to date three times a year on important developments related to the different topics addressed. This newsletter will deal with the measurement of progress from the different topics summarizing major findings in order to help in the rapid dissemination of good practices;
- Online meetings: could be set up to address particular issues. Web-meetings are an excellent way to set up discussions easier at a lower cost, since time and money usually spent in traveling and accommodation is saved, while quality of exchanges are maintained.

### 3. Forecasted activities - 2014

Under this framework and in order to meet those objectives, the following table is presenting a general timeframe of actions that will be performed in 2014:

		2014											
Tasks		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
	Preparatory works (identifying potential contacts and preparation of a "Network activities note")	■	■										
Contacts	Presentation of the concept note and preparation of contacts database		■	■	■	■	■	■					
	Update contacts list		■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Technical Exchanges	Preparation of a "Topic background paper"		■	■	■	■							
	Launch of an electronic forum				■	■						■	
	Treatment of gathered information and preparation a revised document					■	■	■	■				
	Discussions on the document between network members							■	■	■			

	Specific workshop and release of the information during the EUROPE-INBO meeting																		
Dissemination	Regular communication to relevant CIS groups																		
	Introduction to SCG																		
	Website / Newsletter																		

- Monitoring
- NWRM and River Restoration
- Overall activities

#### 4. Next steps and follow-up (SCG, CIS groups)

The INBO European Networks aim at enriching the WFD Common Implementation Strategy with analyses coming directly from field practitioners. The idea is to bring light and concrete experiences to the CIS activities by being a media/a link between the RDBs which are the operational units and the European and national levels where decisions are taken.

To capitalize on these experiences and recommendations that will be defined during the different events, all information should be widely disseminated in the different RDBs but also promoted in the various working groups at the Member States level and at the European decision-making level.

**SCG members and CIS groups’ members are invited to share their opinions and proposals on the basis of this note (by mid-May).**

Members are also invited to promote the network within RDBs in order to improve the quality and to expand the database with relevant contacts for each topic.