Latest updates in approaching cross cutting issues in the WFD implementation process at the EU level

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Cross cutting issues

Cross cutting issues were recognized before the Conference as key issues for the future EU water policy in 2nd River Basin Management Plans. These issues are identified in the EU CIS process for 2nd planning cycle and new water strategy for safeguard to Europe's waters. The new water strategy called "Blueprint" outlines actions that concentrate on better implementation of current water legislation, integration of water policy objectives into other policies, and filling the gaps in particular as regards water quantity and efficiency.

Water and Agriculture

- Eutrophication and use of agricultural pesticides as an example illustrating the cross cutting nature
- Sustainable use and management of the freshwater for agriculture in order to protect aquatic ecosystems and contribute to the objectives of the WFD
- Management of the nutrients coming from agriculture in order to protect water resources, including protection strips alongside the water bodies

Main envisaged actions related to agriculture

- The need to tackle the input of nutrients into the environment at source, for example by reducing nitrate application to agricultural land by aligning the aims of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) with the Nitrates Directive (91/676) and the WFD
- The improvement of water quality through management of river catchment, estuarine and coastal areas through the WFD, the Nitrates Directive, and via Article 7 of Directive 76/464 on the pollution caused by certain dangerous substances discharged into the aquatic environment of the Community
- To reduce and eliminate nutrient impacts to ecosystems and wildlife including Natura 2000 sites

Chemicals

- Phase out the use of chemicals of very high concern, only authorising their use if no safer alternative is available and there is an overriding societal need for use.
- Ensure that the definition 'of very high concern' includes chemicals that are persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT), very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB) or have endocrine disrupting properties.
- Regulate the production and use of chemicals within Europe, and the import of chemicals, preparations and articles into Europe.
- Ensure the availability and accessibility of data on market volumes and patterns of use, therefore assisting with the identification of hazardous substances that may end up in the marine environment.

WFD and Climate Change

- Climatic variables are the root of many of the parameters that influence water resources and therefore it is important to consider climate change when aiming to achieve the WFD objectives (good status of all waters).
- The design of the WFD provides scope to adapt to climate change through the cyclical river basin planning process. However, further clarification is needed as to how and at what stages climate change can be considered in river basin management planning
- It is necessary to identify what can and should be done in the different upcoming River Basin Management planning cycles in relation to climate change impacts and adaptation.

WFD, Hydropower and Navigation

- Related to hydromerphological alterations
- Identify how best to manage synergisms and antagonisms between the management of hydromorphological alterations in river basin management planning and the requirements of navigation and hydropower policies & activities by appraising social, economic and environmental impacts and benefits;
- Exchange information on the assessment and management of hydromorphological pressures coming from navigation an hydropower and impacts between Member States;

Research on cross cutting issues

- Ecosystem services and sustainability
- Safe Water
- Water Innovative Technologies
- Understanding, managing and conserving water resources

Ecosystem Services and Sustainability

- Environmental resources and ecosystem services are direct inputs into the economy
- The concept of ecosystem services is based upon the assumption that there is a connection between good ecological status and the provision of several benefits, such as water supply, food supply, biodiversity, landscape value, and others, and it is already used by some managers and decision makers as a powerful tool for building and implementing programs of measures.
- Approaches using ecosystem services could therefore potentially support WFD objectives

Main thematic area related to ecosystem services

- Increasing our understanding of ecosystems context, functions and processes, and safeguard natural resources for future generations by identifying measures to help the adaptation and reaction to current and future pressures on the aquatic environment
- Develop new tools in the field of ecological engineering and early warning systems.
- Develop a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and behavioural changes associated with this area, including issues of preservation vs. restoration costs and the demonstration of the economic value and social benefits of aquatic ecosystem services.

Safe Water

- Water quality and human health may be threatened by emerging pollutants, priority substances, endocrine disruptors and emerging risks such as pathogens (including antibiotic resistant bacteria and viruses), cyanotoxins and nanomaterials
- Key knowledge gaps remain concerning their environmental behaviour in surface water, treated waters and groundwater, and their impact on human health through the irrigation of crops, water supply, distribution and storage in rural or urban environments
- Water quality and supply can be threatened by climate change, natural hazards and extreme events such as droughts and floods

Main thematic areas related to safe water

- Provide a better understanding of the behaviour of new or poorly understood contaminants and their impacts on water quality with a particular emphasis on drinking and bathing waters, and on ecosystems and human health
- Improve our resilience to climate change, extreme events and natural hazards including new tools and best practices in relation to water infrastructure and the prediction & management of natural hazards to ensure the on-going availability and delivery of high quality water.
- Develop a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and behavioural changes associated with this area, including impact of water charges on water consumption, as well as behavioural changes

Water Innovative Technologies

- Contribute to improving the quantity and quality of water bodies, such that our resources will be used in a more efficient way; and gain a better understanding of the socio-economic aspects, governance and behavioural changes associated with this area.

- The objectives of this research area are aligned with the aims of the European Resource Efficiency Roadmap

Main thematic area related to water innovative technologies

- Develop novel treatment and distribution options and improve water systems efficiency focusing on aspects such as new materials and processes, new management tools, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), energy efficiency, and small scale water storage
- Develop problem-solving research leading to the development of market-orientated solutions such as the development of sensor networks and real-time information systems in the water cycle and improved water treatment technologies.
- Improve the quantity and quality of water bodies and developing ways to use these resources more efficiently, including social acceptance of reused waste and assessing costs against beneficial outcomes to avoid disproportionate costs.

Understanding, managing and conserving the water resources

- Contribute to better use and protection of water resources, by gaining a better understanding of the potential impacts of human activities, such as abstractions, discharges and land-use on groundwater, rivers, lakes, estuaries and coastal waters
- Attention will be given to pressures on water arising from agricultural activities
- Understanding the mechanisms leading to improved water management will lead to better policy design, implementation and adaptation

Main thematic areas on managing and conserving the water resources

- Further an integrated approach to water management by improving our understanding of the impact of pressures on water quality and quantity, looking at adaptive water management approaches, as well as socio-economic issues.
- Promote the concept of water foot printing while increasing water resource efficiency and reducing water pollution.
- Strengthen socio-economic approaches to conserve our water resources including public participation and decision support systems (DSS) and facilitating policy acceptance from the public.
- Deal with socio-economic considerations and practical measures for mitigating the impacts of pressures


Thank you for
your attention