



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



**13<sup>th</sup> "EUROPE-INBO 2015" INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON EUROPEAN WATER DIRECTIVES IMPLEMENTATION**

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**Thessaloniki, Greece  
21 - 24 October 2015  
Place ...**

## **"EUROPE-INBO DECLARATION OF THESSALONIKI"**

### **Final Version**

The 13<sup>th</sup> conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group, which took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, from 21 to 24 October 2015, at the invitation of the Greek Ministry of Reconstruction of Production, Environment and Energy – Special Water Secretariat, gathered 193 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as of NGOs, companies, international and regional organizations, coming from 32 countries (country list appended).

Established within INBO in 2003 in Valencia, Spain, the "EUROPE-INBO" Group of European Basin Organizations for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD – 2000/60/EC) aims at enriching the implementation of water policies in Europe, especially the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) with its practical field experience to support the Candidate Countries and disseminate the principles and tools of European water-related Directives, especially to EU neighbouring partner countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and the Mediterranean.

As part of 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 respective regions, the 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, Megeve (France) in 2006, Rome (Italy) in 2007, Sibiu (Romania) in 2008, Stockholm (Sweden) in 2009, Megeve (France) in 2010,

Oporto (Portugal) in 2011, Istanbul (Turkey) in 2012, Plovdiv (Bulgaria) in 2013 and Bucharest (Romania) in 2014..

In the extension of the European Commission's "Blueprint", the work of the 13<sup>th</sup> "EUROPE - INBO 2015" international conference in Thessaloniki was organized around four roundtables dedicated to current events in the practical implementation of the WFD and other European water-related directives. They allowed discussing the following issues:

- Measures of adaptation to the effects of climate change; "water" component of the COP21 in Paris in 2015; preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> European Water Framework Directive management plans (2016-2021);
- Water governance in Transboundary Basins;
- The financing of water policy and economic analyses;
- Local processes for the application of the Directives (tributaries, aquifers, bays....) and the participation of local stakeholders (Local Authorities, farmers, industrialists, hydropower sector, fishermen, inland waterways, fish farmers, NGOs, etc.), and public involvement.

It should be reminded that, for INBO members, the term "basin" covers the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers, either local, national or transboundary.

30 papers were presented during the conference and discussed.

A preparatory workshop took place before the EUROPE-INBO conference. It allowed discussing the practices of the various Member-States, highlighting the multiple benefits of the actions already undertaken and drafting recommendations on the implementation of water policy in Europe. The workshop outcomes were presented in a plenary session. The workshop, organized with the support of the National Agency for Water and Aquatic Environments (ONEMA, France), will be published later.

- **Roundtable 1: Measures of adaptation to the effects of climate change** – "Water" component of the COP21 in Paris in 2015. Preparation of WFD 2<sup>nd</sup> Management Plans (2016-2021): Integration of water quantity issues; Better integration with other EU (Flood and Marine Strategy Framework) Directives and with EU sectoral policies; multisectoral approach on a river basin scale, Natural Water Retention Measures, dialogue and authorities for dialogue between stakeholders' communities...

Conscious of the importance of the effects of climate change on water resources, the participants considered that efforts should be made and resources used for measures to adapt to the effects of climate change and should be quickly developed in national and transboundary basins.

During the preparation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> management plans (2016-2021) and programmes of measures, managers began introducing actions related to climate change. But it is advisable to already think about the preparation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cycle and to ensure that adaptation measures are kept in mind when developing the basin management plan. To avoid duplication or inconsistency, these adaptation measures should be part of the basin management plans as planned for by the WFD.

In addition, better integration with other EU directives, such as the Flood Risk Management and Marine Strategy Framework Directives, is to be sought for, especially in the definition of climate change adaptation measures. This is particularly the case for the preparation of the Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) in areas identified as being subject to potentially significant flood risk. These FRMPs should be both coordinated and synchronized with the

River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) and be coordinated with each other in the same basin, which requires, in the case of transboundary basins, a special coordination effort from the Member States and, when the basin extends beyond the EU territory, a joint approach with the EU neighbouring countries.

The multisectoral approach should also be in line with all the economic sectors having an impact on the areas concerned. Sectoral policies (energy, agriculture, urban planning, etc.) and adaptation measures concerning them should also be integrated and made consistent with the adaptation component of the plan.

During the twenty-first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP21) to be organized from 30 November to 11 December 2015 in Paris, a special day dedicated to the issue of "Water and Climate Change" will take place on 2 December. It will allow exchanges on adaptation to climate change in basins and will be the place to promote the Pact launched on INBO initiative, entitled "Commitments for adaptation to climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers". This pact has been widely discussed inside INBO network and with its partners since June 2015.

The EUROPE-INBO Members emphasized the large number of experiments undertaken in basins for adaptation to climate change. The publication "Water and Climate Change Adaptation in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Good Practices" produced by UNECE and INBO and released at the 7<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum identifies and develops these positive experiences that should be more widely disseminated, especially within the EU and under the EU neighbourhood policy. The possibilities of transferring these good practices from one area to another should be studied and promoted by public and private stakeholders in the context of multi-partner and cross-border actions.

They reminded that better integrated river basin management is needed to implement the adopted measures and to face the multiple pressures, including those caused by climate change.

They also stressed the importance of strengthening the process of acquisition and processing of the necessary data and reiterated their recommendation to widen the exchange of experience among European countries on these aspects of integrated data management.

The Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) aim to improve water status, with a multi-functional approach, that covers hydrogeological, hydromorphological aspects of diffuse pollution as well as hydrological aspects of flood and low water management. By introducing a change in approach, the NWRMs and more broadly the green infrastructure should lead to greater resilience of the environments. They are thus good adaptation measures. By enabling the sharing of experiences already carried out and fostering the structuring of information, the European Platform put on-line with the NWRM project, should help the transfer of good practice among stakeholders but also the financing of these measures by providing a recognized framework. The EUROPE-INBO conference is an opportunity to inform and mobilize the authorities and basin managers on the issue of restoration and water retention by natural means, to integrate it into adaptation plans and make NWRMs full adaptation measures.

- **Roundtable 2: Water governance in Transboundary Basins:** International Districts; Role and means of International Commissions; Bi and Multilateral Agreements and Conventions, Implementation of WFD principles and tools and of the Floods Directive in EU Neighbouring Countries, riparian of transboundary basins...

The UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997 entered into force on 17 August 2014. The 1997 Convention seeks to ensure the development, conservation, management and protection of international rivers and to promote their optimum use. With the UNECE Water Convention (1992) and the 1997 Convention, international bodies and nations have a strong framework for international cooperation in transboundary basins.

It should be reminded that the two conventions address different aspects of transboundary water sources : for example, the 1997 Convention details the factors of equitable and reasonable use of water resources while the 1992 Convention prescribes the content of international agreements and activities to be undertaken jointly. They also provide critical elements to improve water governance in transboundary basins.

The EUROPE-INBO Members reminded their support to an effective implementation of these international conventions for better governance and management of international waters. Noting that 60% of EU territory is located in transboundary basins, the participants emphasized that International Commissions have a decisive role in the implementation of EU directives even beyond EU borders and called for increased support to these commissions of transboundary districts.

Water governance in transboundary basins should be further improved, especially for good water management in the international districts created for WFD implementation. Besides the WFD, this more efficient governance should allow for coordinated implementation of the Flood and Marine Strategy Framework Directives in transboundary basins and marine areas, including those shared with non-EU or EEA member neighbouring countries. .

This implies that riparian countries sign cooperation agreements or rely on already established Commissions or structures respectively to create the conditions for appropriate governance, established on the basis of mutual trust, a shared understanding of the problems of the basin based on accurate, accessible and shared data and analysis with stakeholder involvement. The role and resources of the International Commissions of transboundary rivers should be increased, when necessary, to enable effective implementation of the WFD and "Daughter" Directives in the countries concerned or associate in a common prospect of achieving good water status the non-EU or EEA member countries.

The work conducted within the OECD's Water Governance Initiative, especially the one led by INBO and UNESCO, may also fuel progress in the governance of national and transboundary basins inside the EU and beyond, including in EU neighbouring countries.

- **Roundtable 3: The financing of water policy and economic analysis.**  
Implementation and funding of Programmes of Measures: Mobilization of funds and especially access to EU Structural Funds; Principle of cost recovery; Economic analysis for cost-effective combination of measures.

The funding of Programmes of Measures for the effective implementation of the WFD and its "daughter" directives remains a concern for water managers in the European Union.

The participants underlined the importance of granting adequate funding to achieve the WFD objectives and ensure its effectiveness and consistency with the other EU directives.

The search for funds should be guided by the WFD polluter-pays principle and based on cost recovery mechanisms. These principles should be introduced and reinforced wherever necessary.

The EUROPE-INBO Members reminded the interest of ensuring that the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> RBMPs be established on the basis of a more comprehensive economic analysis of pressures on water resources and proper quantification of costs and impacts of the measures needed to comply with the WFD objectives.

This economic analysis should determine the combinations of measures that will be most cost-effective. For such a purpose, clear and transparent methodologies should be established as well as economic research increased to better understand the costs of inaction, including the non-implementation of the WFD, the disproportionate cost and cost / benefit analysis. This also applies to legal research to find new public / private multi-partnership institutional responses for practical and quick implementation by local contracting authorities. Similarly, the effort made for improving common knowledge should continue as well as the development of a practical guide as part of the CIS.

A better understanding of environmental and climatic events of infinite complexity and of human impacts on the environment (especially water resources) passes through a long-term and coordinated investment for research, development and technological and social innovation. This will help to find solutions for adapting to the growing needs of our society and economy, to future changes that will occur at local and global levels, while preserving the ecosystem services that are vital to the people's life and well-being. This should enable the paradigm shift (water reuse, decentralized sanitation, etc.) needed for facing these new challenges.

The participants underlined the need for action at European, State and basin levels to increase the consistency of environmental objectives, sectoral policies and practices, especially in the agricultural sector.

An effort should be made so that the financial resources available at European level, namely the Structural Funds and at other levels (both in research and innovation and in the implementation of ad hoc policies) finds greater use in the measures for water resources management. The combination and integration of different funding sources help to improve the implementation of measures induced by the river basin management plans.

The EU and Member States should also maintain a high level of financial support for solidarity with the Southern and EU neighbouring countries, to promote better governance in basins shared with Member States and support the development of solidarity financing for access to water and sanitation both for public health reasons and for preventing the degradation of water quality.

- **Roundtable 4: Local processes for the application of the Directives** (tributaries, aquifers, bays....) **and the participation of local stakeholders** (Local Authorities, farmers, industrialists, energy companies, inland waterway carriers, fishermen and fish farmers, NGOs, etc.), Public involvement...

The participants reminded that the involvement of stakeholders and the public is crucial to improve water resources management and that their information and their participation since the beginning in decision-making processes need to be developed for greater appropriation of the measures and actions included in the management plans.

The users' appropriation of water policies and of their resulting measures is essential in order to make progress and improve efficiency.

Public access to monitoring results and knowledge on water and aquatic environments facilitates this appropriation, and therefore increases the efficiency of actions. This refers not only to the establishment of decision-making or advisory bodies at different territorial levels, but also to the representation of different users or groups of users. These are essential in case of public participation to enhance the understanding of the challenges ahead and of the necessary efforts.

The participants in the EUROPE-INBO Conference emphasized the importance of better involvement of local communities in projects related to water resources management. This local community involvement should be developed through participatory exercises that introduce them to the more comprehensive approach by initially confronting them with issues directly affecting them. This progressive approach aims to bring all the local stakeholders (decision-makers, local authorities and the public in general) to discuss together.

Implementation of the measures is, in many countries, the responsibility of local public or private contracting authorities. It is therefore essential to ensure their active participation in the national WFD implementation process from the beginning of the project and in the drafting of programmes of measures.

The users' appropriation of the water-related policies and measurements which result from them is a passage impossible to circumvent to progress and gain in effectiveness. The access of the public to the results of the monitoring and knowledge on water and aquatic environments facilitates this appropriation, and thus improves the effectiveness of the actions. These elements are essential with a public participation to increase the understanding of the challenges to come and efforts needed.

If the efforts made during the first WFD cycle mainly aimed at meeting the WFD obligations now the focus should be more on the exploitation and sound use of the knowledge produced, and its wide dissemination to and appropriation by decision makers and the general public, at suitable levels, not to mention the local level.

Beyond the practice of providing local stakeholders and the public with the results obtained by monitoring systems, training plans and experience sharing among multiple basin stakeholders, the use of interpretation tools leading to better communication with decision makers and the general public should be considered at the local level. The monitoring programme may be a communication tool in itself if it is based on standardized methods for improving understanding, comparison and use of the information.

This problem should be viewed with emphasis laid upon integration of quantitative issues, adaptation to climate change, coordination between the directives of the European Union (water, flood, marine strategy, habitats, flora and fauna) and the link to sectoral policies (agriculture, energy, navigation, urbanization, forest, environment...).

In addition, the participants in the EUROPE-INBO conference recommended that European basin organizations and decision makers promote the development of local approaches that lay out overall goals for use, development, quantitative and qualitative protection of water resources on a suitable local scale. The effectiveness of local approaches involves the transformation of general issues, on the one hand, and local issues, on the other, into local challenges by promoting the cross-cutting of the interests of local stakeholders especially in the context of a local dialogue. Public authorities should encourage and participate in these dialogues to improve cooperation and vertical coordination.

Furthermore, the change of scale is very enabling to meet European guidelines and lead actions implemented in the river basin. For example, by changing perspectives (having a local vision), it is easier to respond to new European guidelines regarding eco-engineering (such as natural water retention measures).

In this sense, the development of river committees/commissions composed of different stakeholders (elected officials, users, State) and their participation, being either voluntary, flexible, non-formalized or institutionalized and regulated, should be firmly promoted. The local stakeholders thus gathered define together the shared water management objectives and the ways to achieve them.

The success of these approaches is based on a triad of stakeholders: a dynamic local leader who mobilizes local stakeholders from the start of the process, a local facilitator, a local support structure that promotes the project strategy and implements its orientations; this structure can be an association, an NGO, a local authority, a union or a regional natural park, etc.

It is recommended to preferentially support actions undertaken within this framework.

Local approaches are a transmission belt between the local, basin and State levels and a tool for appropriation of the space by local stakeholders thus enabling the conditions for action.

It is recommended that operations demonstrating their added value should be carried out to encourage the implementation of such initiatives, including the creation of a forum for exchange of practices and experiences particularly in the context of a European network of basin organizations having territorial approaches. In this context, transboundary territorial approaches should help to ensure the consistency of actions undertaken on both sides of the borders.

A preliminary socio-economic assessment of the territory ensures that all interests will be represented in decision-making bodies of the local management plan. The evaluation of these plans is to be encouraged.

Information sharing and harmonization, including spatial information, must go beyond the EU territory and concern all the riparian countries of the same transboundary basin, thus promoting the emergence of coordination in the development of river basin management plans in transboundary basins.

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The "EUROPE - INBO 2015" conference is a new important step not only for assessing the implementation of the first cycle of River Basin Management Plans (2010-2015), but also for formulating proposals to improve the implementation of the WFD and associated Directives in the next cycles, especially for the 2016-2021 period.

While welcoming the progress made in WFD implementation, as announced by the Director of the DG Environment during his speech at the conference, the EUROPE-INBO Members consider that the efforts made in the implementation of measures should be increased so that all water bodies achieve "good status" within a reasonable time.

For future progress, they emphasized the great need for better coordination between the European water policy and other EU economic and sectoral policies, such as the CAP, the policy on transnational transport or renewable energy.

The recommendations also fed the preparatory work for the COP 21 that will deal with the issue of climate change and water resources during a specific Day.

All conference participants welcomed the adoption of a sustainable development goal (SDG 6) on access to water and sanitation for everyone and on sustainable water resource management and each person expresses its willingness to act for the achievement of this ambitious goal.

The participants thanked Romania and especially Ms. Daniela RADULESCU (Romania), for having fulfilled with determination and success the EUROPE-INBO Group presidency during the year 2014/2015.

The Professor Jacques GANOULIS, Special Secretary for Water in the Ministry of Environment & Energy of Greece was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO Group for the year to come, until the next conference in 2016.

The delegates gratefully accepted the proposal of the French Authorities to organize "EUROPE- INBO 2016" conference in Lourdes.

They also decided to hold next "EUROPE-INBO" conference in 2017 in Dublin in Ireland.

The delegates thanked the Greek Authorities for their excellent hospitality and for the excellent organization of this 13<sup>th</sup> Conference.

**APPROVED IN THESSALONIKI ON 24 OCTOBER 2015**

The Final Declaration, all papers and photographs of the conference are available on the website:  
[www.inbo-news.org](http://www.inbo-news.org)

