



**Proposal for Europe-INBO 2015 workshop on
“Diffuse pollution sources, how to develop solutions for tackling those pressures at local level?”**

Concept note

V4

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Context and Objectives

With regards to the WFD, the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe’s Water (2012) has shown that diffuse pollution is one of the most important significant pressures affecting water bodies in Europe.

Furthermore, both the March 2015 communication of the Commission on WFD and FD implementation and the assessment of RBMPs Programmes of measures (SWD(2015) 50 final) reminded that diffuse pollution significantly affects 90 % of river basin districts, 50 % of surface water bodies and 33 % of groundwater bodies across the EU. This communication mentions that “Two thirds of the RBDs reported that the basic measures (Nitrates Directive plus the WFD basic measures in Article 11(3) b to l) are not sufficient to tackle diffuse pollution from agriculture, indicating a need to take supplementary measures”. And “The type of basic measures more often reported as significantly delayed are those related to water abstraction (31 RBDs or 23%).”

In this communication, it’s highlighted that at European level, the agricultural sector is the primary source of diffuse pollution, along with urban activities and industries to a lesser extent. In spite of some progress in relation to declining mineral fertilisers consumption, there are still many gaps in the basic measures put in place by Member States to address agricultural pressures, including a lack of measures to control phosphate and nitrates emissions outside nitrate vulnerable zones established under the Nitrates Directive.

And Member States also need to strengthen their basic measures to tackle diffuse pollution. Despite the fact that there is still a long way to go to achieving ‘good status’ and that the pre-WFD measures are not sufficient in many river basin districts, many Member States rely mostly on voluntary measures. While these can effectively close a fraction of the remaining gap, significant improvement can only be achieved through compulsory basic measures. Therefore, more efforts have to be

implemented to address these pressures in order to reach good ecological status of water bodies as required by the WFD.

In the context of fully starting the implementation of the second WFD river basin management plans, it is proposed to organise a workshop on **“Diffuse pollution sources: how to develop solutions for tackling those pressures at local level?”** in the frame of the next conference of the Euro-INBO (Fall 2015, Greece)

The primary objective of this workshop is to compare practices and practical experiences of Member States and basin organisations on diffuse pollution reduction, and promote the exchange of questions and solutions in this domain.

The workshop also addresses the need for explanatory elements of strategies followed by Member States to fight against diffuse pollution, especially by focusing on local or sub-basin actions that have been implemented and that could be duplicated elsewhere.

Finally, this workshop is to be seen as one contribution to peer review on the implementation of the WFD, as desired by the European Commission in the Blueprint to safeguard Europe’s water.

Contents

The workshop will offer a reflection and exchange of experiences on different themes with a view to expressing strengths and weaknesses based on these experiences. In a first approach, and after an introduction part that will set-up the scene on the EU and MS in dealing with diffuse pollution, the main themes and questions that are proposed to be investigated during the workshop would be, from a RBD authorities and managers point of view, as presented below.

Theme 1: Strategies and stakeholders involvement for reduction of diffuse pollution

Reduction of diffuse pollution from agriculture implies strategies and measures which involve various stakeholders from the farmers to the citizen, including the local authorities. It may also require a territorial approach which may be associated with some other policies. This work session aims to exchange and compare practices and practical experiences of Member States and basin organisations, and raise strengths and weaknesses of strategies – in relation to local contexts - implemented in European countries to reduce diffuse pollution in terms of:

1. Governance:

- a) Stakeholders involvement: who is involved in the strategy (development or implementation) and how? Efficiency of the methods used to involve stakeholders and identification of success factors?
- b) Territorial approach mobilised to reduce diffuse pollution (possibly among other problems, possibly included in or including water bodies good status objectives): strengths, key factors of efficiency
- c) Integration of strategy against diffuse pollution in river basin approaches; consideration of the basin-wide impact (local and downstream up to transitional and coastal waters): feasibility, efficiency

2. Which tools (administrative, financial, organisational, legal) and incentives on a voluntary basis and/or on administrative requirements basis are available to help fight diffuse pollution and to facilitate stakeholders involvement?

Theme 2: Mitigation measures to reduce diffuse pollution in particular for drinking water abstraction

Diffuse pollution may impede a proper use of water, and has several negative impacts that need to be tackled. Managing the different uses of water is essential to sustainably manage European water resources, especially under a context of climate change which participates in increasing pressures on this natural resource. During this work session, the focus will be put on *better protection of drinking water abstraction points against diffuse pollution*. Participants of this work session will be invited to share their own experience on this topic and a discussion will be initiated on the strengths and the weaknesses of their action plans or initiatives. The following questions will guide the exchanges.

1. What type of measures, action plans or national strategies are put in place to reduce diffuse pollution and protect drinking water abstraction points? Are they sufficient to protect water catchment and why?
2. What actors or organizations are involved and lead actions plans execution and follow-up? What are the drivers and barriers which ensure actors mobilization and the success of these plans? What tools are used to facilitate actor's involvement and action?
3. Which indicators are used to check action plans effectiveness? At which spatial and temporal scales?

Theme 3: Characterization of pressures and risk of impacts related to diffuse pollution

WFD Article 5 requires a review of the impact of human activity on the status of surface water and groundwater. For the particular case of diffuse pollution, how pressures and risk of impacts are characterized?

1/ Identify and quantify pressures related to diffuse pollution:

Which tools are used to characterize pressure due to nitrogen, phosphorus and pesticides from diffuse sources in your country? What are their functioning principles? What are their limits or associated uncertainties, and how could they be improved?

2/ Estimate the risk of impact due to pressures related to diffuse pollution

The risk of impact could be estimated by modeling or considering both pressures and environment vulnerability.

Which tools are used for estimating the risk of impact of nitrogen, phosphorus and pesticides in your country? What are their functioning principles? What are their limits or associated uncertainties, and how could they be improved?

Participants

The contents of the workshop will not be too scientific nor technically focused as the INBO's audience is made of a variety of profiles, such as river basin policy makers and managers.

Thus the suitable profiles for this workshop are those of "generalist field managers", belonging to WFD competent authorities or basin organisations and members of the Europe-INBO network, involved in water management planning or decision making process. No high level technical profile is required given that the exchanges are not sought to be at a too technical level. Participants of this workshop would be the usual participants of the Europe-INBO's conferences as this workshop would be fully part of the conference agenda.

For any further information or expression of interests, please send an email to:

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