



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



**14th "EUROPE-INBO 2016" INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ON THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

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**Lourdes, France  
19 - 22 October 2016  
Place: Hotel Paradis**

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

**Last Final**

The 14<sup>th</sup> conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group, which took place in Lourdes, France, from 19 to 22 October 2016, at the invitation of the French Water Agencies, the City of Lourdes and with ONEMA's support, gathered 199 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations, elected official, as well as of NGOs, companies, international and regional organizations and academic institutions, coming from 44 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, implemented in European territories including those overseas, especially to EU neighbouring partner countries in the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia and in 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, Bucharest (Romania) in 2014 and Thessaloniki (Greece) in 2015.

The work of the 14<sup>th</sup> "EUROPE - INBO 2016" international conference in Lourdes 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:

- WFD: towards the 2019 review;
- Water governance in transboundary basins;
- Adaptation to Climate Change: Resources management, scarcity and drought;
- Adaptation to Climate Change: Knowledge of Flood Risks, Management of Aquatic Environments and Preventive Measures in the Basins.

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

36 papers were presented during the conference and discussed.

Prior to the EUROPE-INBO conference, three preparatory workshops were organized on the following topics:

- Programmes of Measures and the Peer-Review Mechanism,
- Smart Water Management Systems, "SAID" project (Smart Water Management with Integrated DSS),
- Circular Economy and Wastewater Reuse.

On the sidelines of the conference, three side events took place: the EDgE project (End-to-end Demonstrator for improved decision making in the water sector in Europe), the workshop on Climate-ADAPT (European Climate Adaptation Platform) and the "EcoCuencas" project.

The workshops outcomes were presented in a plenary session.

- **Roundtable 1 : WFD: towards the 2019 review.**

In a broad sense, the European Water Policy is mainly based on a set of three directives: the Water Framework Directive (WFD), the Flood Directive (FD) and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD). In addition to these tools, the European Commission has drafted a strategic communication document, the "Blueprint", adopted in 2012, which gives guidelines for water policy on resource conservation taking climate change into account in particular.

The WFD, enacted in 2000, plans for having its "review" made in 2019 at the latest. In Amsterdam in June 2016, on the occasion of their half-yearly meeting, the European Water Directors submitted to the Commission a paper entitled "thoughtstarter", which identifies the stakes of this review. The first of them is the future of the WFD beyond 2027, when it is clear that the objective of "good status" of water bodies will not be achieved in all the basins by that date, contrary to the requirements of the Directive. An extraordinary meeting of the European Water Directors was convened by the European Commission on past 6 October to share the work paths to explore.

This issue is also reflected in the conclusions of the Council of Environment Ministers of 17 October, 2016. The European institutions and Member States have started thinking about the future of the water policy.

The WFD has advanced by establishing the principle of integrated water resources management in basins, by widely introducing the stakeholders' participation for a shared vision and by relying on cost recovery to fund the water policy.

By passing from water quality objectives, only based on physics and chemistry, to environmental objectives that take into account the status of the ecosystem functioning, the WFD has, in some way, been a cultural revolution. The mobilization of all stakeholders, i.e. the river basin or district authorities, local authorities, contracting authorities, in addition to the government bodies, was also a significant contribution of the WFD.

Today, the second management cycle is ongoing throughout the European Union and it is already time to prepare the third cycle that will cover the period from 2022 to 2027.

Failure to achieve "good status of water bodies" in 2027 at the latest, despite the efforts made to reduce the pressures of human activities on water resources, and the threat of European litigation are fears shared across Europe, leading to questions about the operational implementation of the Directive in the years to come.

How to consider its continuation, how to revitalize WFD implementation and restore credibility to achieve the WFD objectives? The Directive review is an opportunity to provide answers to these questions.

At this stage, several factors should be taken into account:

- the principles established in the WFD are now widely recognized and its high environmental goal is also fostered;
- the investments already made to implement the WFD, both from the point of view of the organizations and practical work, should be amortized and sustained;
- the challenge of integrating the objectives by sector, especially in the areas of agriculture, industry, land management, placing chemical products on the market...;
- the real technical difficulties met in defining what is the good status, and how to report the progress made and to improve the health of aquatic ecosystems, the one out - all out principle masking progress;
- the challenges posed by climate change in terms of water resource quantity and quality.

It would be wise to take a cautious approach to the WFD review as a full amendment would once again open significant debates in an unfavourable socio-economic context for environmental protection. Rather than change the wording of the WFD, it would be better to improve the operational conditions of its implementation with both a more pragmatic approach of the targets, based on established scientific data, and the introduction of the Directive into a European water policy that facilitates the integration of WFD objectives into other EU sectoral policies (agriculture, energy, transport, placing of chemicals on the market ...), the development of innovative projects and that enables proper financial and technical support.

To do so, it would be necessary that the Commission produces a clear roadmap for the WFD review and gives guidelines on the definition of targets for the 3rd WFD cycle. These work prospects will be the key to size the pace of the investments needed in the 2022 – 2027 period.

Moreover, full measure should be taken of the changing global legal context with, on the one hand, the UNGA adoption, in September 2015, of Agenda 2030 with Sustainable Development Goals including SDG 6 on water, and, on the other, the adoption, in December 2015, of the Paris Agreement on climate at the end of the COP 21, which puts climate change adaptation and mitigation at the same level.

Therefore, water, first issue of adaptation to climate change must become again a priority of EU foreign policy.

The WFD revision is the way to give a strong signal in this direction.

Participants in the EUROPE-INBO conference welcomed the discussion launched on the WFD review. They supported the principle of pragmatic and realistic progress based on a clear roadmap.

The EUROPE-INBO Members are at the disposal of the authorities concerned to participate in discussions on both the drafting of the roadmap and in the various steps leading to the WFD review.

In addition, supported by the results of 7 reviews conducted in 2015 and 2016 in seven European basins, the "peer review" workshop gathered practitioners from twelve countries: Austria, Spain, Estonia, France, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Romania and Morocco and Moldova as observers. The conclusions of the meeting highlighted that the main vector of progress lies in the organization of a better sharing of the experiments carried out in the different basins and Member States. EUROPE-INBO has a prominent place in this experience sharing system and the results of the reviews should be food for thought on the WFD future.

- **Roundtable 2 : Water Governance in Transboundary Basins**

To improve the governance of transboundary basins (surface and ground water), the international community now has a solid framework for international cooperation including the UN Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses of 1997, which entered into force on 17 August 2014, (called New York Convention), the UNECE Water Convention of 1992 (called the Helsinki Convention) and the draft articles on the law of transboundary aquifers of 2008.

The EUROPE-INBO Members reminded their wish to see an effective application and the taking into account of these international regulatory instruments for better governance and management of international waters. Regarding the European Union, where 60% of the territory is located in transboundary basins, these instruments are widely taken into account in EU texts and their application is real. The participants nevertheless underlined that, due to the decisive role of international commissions in the implementation of EU directives, and this even beyond the EU borders, greater support of these Commissions of transboundary districts must be considered.

Water governance in transboundary basins should be improved, especially for good water management in the international districts established in compliance with the WFD. In addition to the WFD, this more efficient governance should ensure a coordinated implementation of the Flood Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive in transboundary basins and marine areas, including those shared with the riparian non-EU or EEA countries.

This implies the signing of cooperation agreements between riparian Countries or relying on Commissions already established to enable conditions for appropriate governance, based on mutual trust, a shared understanding of the basin problems supported by precise, accessible and shared data and analyses and stakeholders' involvement. The role and resources of International Commissions of Transboundary Rivers should be increased whenever necessary to enable effective implementation of the WFD and "Daughter" Directives in the countries concerned or to associate the countries, non-members of the EU or EEA, in a common perspective of achieving good water status.

The work done in the OECD's Water Governance Initiative, especially the one led by INBO and UNESCO, can also feed the progress made in the governance of national and transboundary basins within the EU and beyond, particularly in the EU neighbouring countries.

In this sense, the EU and the Member States must maintain a high level of financial support for solidarity with countries neighbouring the EU and Southern countries to improve water governance in basins and support the development of solidarity funding for access to water and sanitation.

- **Roundtable 3: Adaptation to Climate Change: Resources Management, Scarcity and Drought**

As underlined during the COP 21 held in Paris in 2015, we must increase our efforts for properly assessing the effects of climate change on water resources, and appropriate measures must be decided and quickly implemented in national and transboundary basins, in particular.

The Paris Pact on "Water and adaptation to the effects of climate change in the basins of rivers, lakes and aquifers" launched by INBO in partnership with the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) during the COP21 as part of the Lima-Paris Action Agenda (LPAA), summarizes the principles and actions to be implemented for adaptation in the basins.

More than 348 basin organizations, ministries, national and local authorities, companies, donors, research centres and educational institutions, members of the civil society and international organizations from 87 countries are signatories of this "Pact", which has since become the "Global Climate Change Action Agenda (GCAA)".

Beyond this agreement, taking action now is appropriate.

The "EcoCuencas" project, presented during EUROPE-INBO, is a model to follow. Carried out with the support of the European Commission and coordinated by IOWater, the project aims to develop financing mechanisms for water resources management in Latin America. The ultimate goal is to improve cost recovery at basin level (a principle promoted by the Water Framework Directive), especially in a context of adaptation to climate change. The project is carried out in three pilot basins in Latin America, and is directly implemented by local partners with strong sense of ownership, in partnership with European water resources management organizations in an experience sharing logic.

In a side event, MENBO (Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations) presented the EDgE project funded by the European Copernicus Programme. This project objective is to develop and establish a public consultation platform based on hydroclimate indicators calculated for the whole European area. This aims to improve the decision making process in all sectors and for all water users in relation to the mechanisms of adaptation to the impacts of climate change.

The counting of projects for adaptation to climate change in basins must continue. This collection should allow sharing knowledge and practices and supporting the mobilization of donors and governments for this priority issue of water resources adaptation to climate change, now essential and urgent.

At the next COP 22 on Climate Change to be held in Marrakech from 7 to 18 November 2016, a session on water will take place on 9 November, thus showing that water resources are a priority in the thinking and action taken as regards the climate change issue. The

outcome of the inventory of practices and experiences will feed the debates of this session, with the aim to accelerate the implementation of measures of any kind. Please note that some exemplary projects were already presented and promoted during the 10th INBO General Assembly in Merida (Mexico) in June 2016 and at the International Conference on "Water and Climate", preparatory to the COP22, in Rabat (Morocco), on past 11-12 July.

Many basin organizations have already taken actions to adapt water resources management in basins to the foreseeable effects of climate change.

The publication "Water and Adaptation to Climate Change in Transboundary Basins: Lessons Learned and Best Practices" produced by UNECE and INBO in 2015 identifies pilot projects around the world that can be a source of inspiration for other bodies, especially in the EU and under the EU neighbourhood policy.

The transfer of good practice from one area to another must be supported by public and private stakeholders in the context of multi-partnership and transboundary actions.

In the European Union, the River Basin Management Plans and future Programmes of Measures (3rd cycle) must integrate adaptation measures. To avoid duplication or inconsistency, these adaptation measures must be part of the River Basin Management Plans as required by the WFD. These adaptation measures must be taken with a multisectoral approach to all economic sectors that impact the areas concerned. The sectoral policies (energy, agriculture, urban planning,...) and the adaptation measures that concern them should also be integrated into and made coherent with the adaptation component of the plan.

All this involves strengthening the Water Information Systems to make them more efficient and include data on climate change and monitoring and control systems for correcting plans and programmes in real-time, keeping in mind the degree of uncertainty inherent to climate change and its effects.

The EUROPE-INBO Members reiterated their recommendation to increase the exchange of experience among European countries on these aspects of integrated data management.

In addition, a more integrated River Basin Management is needed to implement the measures taken to deal with the effects of climate change and other pressures such as demography, urbanization or agricultural development.

Considering the risk of increased scarcity and drought due to climate change, it should be reminded that water security in the basins is a major issue for quality of life, human security, economic development and conservation of the natural heritage.

The established system must include structural and non-structural measures. Structural measures include actions that allow, for example, water saving, reuse of treated wastewater, increased storage capacity in a multifunctional approach. Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) and green infrastructure are preferred to improve the sustainable availability of resources and their status, combining at once the hydrological aspects of low-water and flood management with the hydro-geological, hydro-morphological and water quality aspects. Such an approach leads to better resilience of the environments and greater flexibility of any existing infrastructure and thus addresses the need for "no regrets" imposed by the uncertainty linked to climate change.

The European Platform on NWRMs allows sharing experience and promotes the structuring of the information for a better transfer of practices between stakeholders and for facilitating the funding of these measures.

Alongside the structural measures, non-structural ones have to be taken to incite users to reduce their consumption, regulate withdrawals, establish a drought crisis management framework and facilitate the society's responsiveness to an extreme water scarcity event.

In this regard, the participants stressed the importance of effective management and monitoring of water withdrawals, including the search for optimal use of water resources, to make water withdrawals compatible with the keeping of a minimum water flow to preserve aquatic environments. They reminded their wish for greater work at the European level for the determination of environmental flows.

- **Roundtable 4: Adaptation to Climate Change: Knowledge of Flood Risks, Management of Aquatic Environments and Preventive Measures in the Basins**

Generally, it is advisable to seek better integration between the WFD, the Flood Risk Management Directive and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, especially when defining measures for adaptation to climate change to be integrated into the River Basin Management Plan and Programme of Measures.

This is particularly the case for the implementation of the Flood Risk Management Plan (FRMP) in areas identified as being subject to potentially significant flood risk. These FRMPs were adopted at the end of 2015 and their implementation is carried out from 2016 to 2021 before a first evaluation planned in 2021. The local strategies for flood risk management must be approved by the end of 2016.

Synchronization with the River Basin Management Plan during its development was effective in principle. Coordination should continue during the whole implementation in the basin, especially in the most difficult cases of transboundary basins where a coordination and cooperation effort should be made by the Member States or even with the EU neighbouring countries.

In all these processes, information and communication technologies and data availability help improve water management. The European "SAID" (Smart Water management with Integrated DSS.) water and innovation project in the Guadalhorce Basin, near Malaga in Spain, has shown the possibility of having a smarter management by optimizing the operation of the dam through a decision making support system that takes into account the performance of the entire river basin. The resulting solution provides recommendations on the operation of the dam to limit flood risks, optimize hydropower production and ensure water quality both for irrigation and domestic use or the environment. The tool can also provide additional services. For example, it can be used for training new dam operators through its simulation capabilities based on historical situations and past manoeuvres. It can aggregate in real-time information on the status of water resources, very useful for all water users. The solutions, fully operational, can be easily adapted to other river basins in the world.

On this topic, the participants recalled that flood prevention can be achieved by relying on the natural functions of rivers and wetlands, which can lead to arrangements that enable the use of wetlands and natural areas fit for flood mitigation or the dynamic slowing of floods (green infrastructure). More specifically, public policies, that may affect watercourses or that aim at their preservation or restoration, shall recommend actions for the preservation or restoration of the riparian areas of these rivers with buffer strips, mobility zones, flood retention areas...

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The "EUROPE - INBO 2016" conference is a new step for the WFD implementation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> cycle of River Basin Management Plans (2016-2021), but also for formulating proposals on the future of this Directive, based on field practices of the EUROPE-INBO members as well as on taking climate change into account in the future.

While welcoming the progress made in WFD implementation, 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 on renewable energy.

The participants thanked Greece and especially Professor Jacques GANOULIS, Special Secretary for Water in the Ministry of Environment & Energy of Greece, for having fulfilled with determination and success the EUROPE-INBO Group presidency during the year 2015/2016.

At the conference, representatives of the Spanish Authorities announced the wish of the Guadalquivir River Basin Authority to organize the 16<sup>th</sup> EUROPE-INBO Conference (2018) in Seville, Spain. The invitation received a warm welcome from all the delegates.

Mr. Jean LAUNAY was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO Group for the year to come, until the next conference in 2017.

The delegates gratefully accepted the proposal of the Irish Authorities to organize the 15<sup>th</sup> "EUROPE- INBO" conference in Dublin, Ireland, in 2017.

The delegates thanked the French Authorities for their excellent hospitality and for the excellent organization of this 14<sup>th</sup> Conference.

### **APPROVED IN LOURDES ON 22 OCTOBER 2016**

The Final Declaration, all papers and photographs of the conference are available on the website:

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