

**Question:**

**How can cooperation over transboundary surface and groundwater resources be achieved in a sustainable and equitable manner?**

**Answer**

**It is not evident that cooperation starts.**

- **Basin cooperation in Europe was a rare phenomenon until 1990. (Only Rhine/Moselle)**
- **Basin cooperation is now the general rule in Europe, but it took more than 50 years**

**Cooperation Meuse and Scheldt started in 1994**

- **Two virtually equal conventions between countries and regions**
- **Decisions through consensus**
- **Permanent secretariats**

## **Question**

**What is sustainable and equitable cooperation?**

## **Answer**

**It is not evident that cooperation is sustainable.**

**Partners develop sustainability by cooperating over a longer period, by producing common results, by developing solutions for problems.**

**Ministerial guidance and political involvement may help.**

**It takes time, patience and exercises to reach sustainable and equitable cooperation.**

**The cooperation works well and is efficient because political decision-makers as well as technical experts are involved.**

**Equitability between the partners is a condition for good and sustainable cooperation. It helps to bridge differences**

- **Technical, economical, political, societal and cultural characteristics will differ**
- **You cannot expect the other(s) to be as you are**
- **Diversity is an added value not a difficulty**
- **Diversity and equitability can go together**
- **Equitability means acceptance of differences**
- **Diversity can create opportunities.**

## Question

What are the mechanisms and tools (.....) that support the achievement of cooperation (.....) while nurturing genuine cooperation?

## Answer

- High level agreement
- Governing body
- Meetings
- Capacity building
- Some rules of procedure
- Umbrella instruments (like UN-ECE convention, European Water Framework Directive)
- Process management
- Platform for expert groups
- Secretary or secretariat

## Accept:

- no real common actions but coordination of individual actions to achieve coherence in the basin
- different agendas but same long term objectives
- different methods and plans but transboundary coherence through roof-transnational reports and management plans
- different languages

## **Question**

**International commissions, arbitration commissions, transboundary basin authorities: What can be learned from these various types of institutions, their statutes, and functions?**

## **Answer**

**International Meuse and Scheldt Commissions were created in 1994 by a convention. The Commissions have specific tasks.**

**A new convention was drafted to take the European Water Framework Directive into account**

**The Scheldt Commission was extended from 5 to 6, the Meuse Commission from 5 to 8 parties.**

**The Commissions became a platform for a basin wide coordination of the implementation of the Water Framework Directive**

**Learned:**

- **Sufficient time and patience is needed to create a commission**
- **To develop the cooperation one needs to create a working organisation**
- **In the initial phase parties and people need to become accustomed to the new situation**
- **It demands additional national efforts, new communication mechanisms and working methods, creativity and flexibility.**
- **Expectations and ambitions will continue to differ**
- **Acceptance develops with time and must be maintained**

## **Question**

**Are principles and tools used in one region transferable to other regions? And if so how would that be possible?**

## **Answer**

**You cannot simply copy one basin cooperation to the other**

**Example:**

- **Compare “brother” Rhine with his sisters Meuse and Scheldt**
- **The point of departure is virtually equal**
- **The Rhine cooperation started in 1950 and was already at a high level in 1975**
- **The cooperation in the Meuse and Scheldt basins started in 1992**
- **Attempts to transfer failed even on short distance!**

**Although European transboundary basin cooperation is governed by one single WFD, the cooperation methods of the river commissions differ. Basin cooperation is partner cooperation**

**Each basin should invent and develop its own method of cooperation.**

**Principles, tools and experiences are available and should be exchanged.**