



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



**12th "EUROPE-INBO" INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
ON THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION**

**Bucharest, Romania
12 - 15 November 2014
RAMADA MAJESTIC Hotel******

"EUROPE-INBO DECLARATION OF BUCHAREST"

Working document - final version

The 12th conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group, which took place in Bucharest, Romania, from 12 to 15 November 2014, at the invitation of the Romanian Ministry of Environment and Climate Change - Department of Water, Forestry and Fisheries -, the National Agency "APELE ROMANE" and the National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management, gathered 134 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as of NGOs, companies, international and regional organizations, coming from 33 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 and Plovdiv (Bulgaria) in 2013..

The work of the 12th "EUROPE-INBO 2014" International Conference in Bucharest was organized around four successive roundtables addressing the following issues:

- Preparation of the WFD 2nd Basin Management Plans (2016 - 2021);
- Presentation of the results of the Workshop on Natural Water Retention Measures and River Restoration as well as the studies and guidance developed within the CIS;
- Implementation and funding of Programmes of Measures;
- Water governance in Transboundary Basins: WFD International Districts; Role and means of International Commissions; Bi and Multilateral Agreements and Conventions.

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

32 papers were presented during the conference and discussed.

Prior to the EUROPE-INBO conference, two workshops were held:

- A technical workshop on river restoration and Natural Water Retention Measures: This workshop gathered field stakeholders, decision-makers, members of the EUROPE-INBO group and representatives of NGOs present at the conference. It focused on restoring rivers and the Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM), and the means to improve WFD implementation with better integration of European Directives and basin management. The workshop aimed to raise awareness of these approaches, to highlight the links between the directives and the multiple advantages of these measures, and to work together on how to communicate on the restoration of rivers and benefits of NRWM and on the ways to mobilize the stakeholders; who may be involved in practical projects in the field.

The main topics were:

- Better integration of European directives and policies through measures to restore rivers and NWRM;
- Better commitments with local communities in projects for ecosystem restoration.

The recommendations resulting from this work were presented at the conference during roundtable 2.

- A workshop on the European regional process for preparing the 7th World Water Forum in Korea in 2015.

The participation of the European Basin Organizations in the Forum was also mentioned during the plenary session of EUROPE-INBO 2014 Conference.

In particular, the European Basin Organizations are invited to take an active part in the three European sessions which will deal with: implementation of the EU "water directives"; adaptation to the effects of climate change and management of European transboundary basins.

Roundtable 1: Preparation of WFD 2nd Management Plans (2016 - 2021)

It focused on: Integration of water quantity issues; Adaptation to climate change; Better integration with other EU Directives (Flood and Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Habitats, fauna and flora) and with other sectoral policies (agriculture, energy, navigation...)

In particular, coordination with elements relating to biodiversity, planned in other instruments of the environmental policy (green infrastructure, environmental action plan, biodiversity strategy), could not only enable the conservation of natural assets but also create synergies with the WFD programme of measures, to increase its effectiveness and facilitate the financing of joint measures.

As the responsible authorities are entering the last phase of preparation of the WFD 2nd management plans, the necessary coordination between the management plan processes and content appears more obvious (especially for the Marine Strategy Framework Directive, the Flood Directive and the WFD).

The participants welcomed current initiatives, such as holding joint meetings between the Water, Marine Environment and Nature Managers at European level, as it was the case at the end of 2013 under the Lithuanian presidency and as it will be the case at the end of 2015 under Luxembourg presidency, or still the organization by the European Commission of a joint workshop on water, nature and marine strategy on 2 and 3 December in Brussels to think about improving the coordination of the directives implementation in these three sectors.

Now, this type of approximation may also be beneficial to national or basin authorities to ensure better synergy between the public policies in these sectors but also from a technical point of view to move towards the integration of respective objectives and means to be achieved during the preparation of River Basin Management Plans and associated Programmes of Measures.

Coordinating planning across sectors and at different levels is a key success factor for a large number of European, national, regional and local policies, Although this process seems simple, and mainly requires improved communication and cooperation, in practice, there are not many concrete examples of effective coordination mechanisms.

Since the publication of "Water Scarcity and Drought Policy Review" in November 2012 as part of the release of the Blueprint by the European Commission, there has been progress with a better consideration of the quantitative issues in WFD management plans and tools. This is particularly the case through the production of guidance documents on water accounts or those planned on E-flows (Environmental Flows) under the CIS. The generalization of "studies on withdrawable volumes" or the development of scarcity and drought management plans in certain Member States, also shows strong ties between the achievement of environmental objectives and the quantitative aspects.

The European Directive 2007/2/EC establishes the Infrastructure for Spatial Information in the European Union (INSPIRE) aims to provide harmonized, high quality spatial information that support implementation of the European environmental policies. Spatial information shared between Member States provides opportunity for better coordination of development of the RBMPs in the cross border river basins, and moreover allows data integration from different thematic communities. This legal initiative emphasizes WFD links to environmental policies as MSFD, Flood Directive, HABITAT with clear potential to increase environmental reporting efficiency.

Finally, the need for understanding the issue of communication about progress made in the status of surface and ground water bodies in 2015 was underlined. Force is to note that recovering good status will take time and a communication exercise with respect to the

citizens and their representatives will be necessary to convince them to continue their efforts in WFD implementation

Roundtable 2: Natural Water Retention Measures and River Restoration

The results of the workshop on Natural Water Retention Measures and River Restoration on the one hand, and the findings of the studies and advices developed within the CIS on the other, were presented to the EUROPE-INBO members.

With regard to the WFD, in 2012, the Blue Print showed that non-point source pollution and hydro-morphology were the main pressures affecting rivers. Thus, greater efforts must be made to deal with these pressures to achieve good ecological status of water as required by the WFD.

One way forward is to progress towards the integration of European texts (Common Agricultural Policy, WFD, Marine Strategy Framework Directive, Flood Directive, Habitats Directive, Birds Directive and the Renewable Energy Directive...) or in the shorter term and in a more pragmatic way to think about improving the coordination of the implementations of the European policies. Thus the measures proposed for reducing pollution and restoring river hydro-morphology can contribute to a wider range of European objectives. It is also the subject matter of the workshop of 2 and 3 December

In addition, better integrated basin management is necessary to implement the adopted measures and deal with these multiple pressures. These measures include the restoration and maintenance of water ecosystems by natural means and incorporate fish migration measures.

There is also a growing interest in Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM) to improve water status as regards hydro-morphology and non-point source pollution and for better flood management.

In late 2013, the DG ENV launched a project dedicated to the integration of Natural Retention Measures in river basin management. This NWRM initiative has two goals: to develop a structured knowledge base on NWRM, easily accessible in the Water Information System for Europe (WISE); and contribute to the development of a "community of NWRM Stakeholders" active at European level. This has been achieved by the launching of various national workshops and the development of a practical handbook to support the implementation and design of NWRM.

In this context, the EUROPE-INBO conference is a real opportunity to inform and mobilize basin authorities and managers on the issue of restoration and water retention by natural means, and its multiple benefits for the implementation of water policies.

A workshop was held on 12 November on this issue, and the results were presented to the EUROPE-INBO members. These results highlighted the following points:

1. How to integrate European directives and policies through river restoration measures and NWRM. The restoration of water bodies can support the goals of several important European water-related policies. Better coordination of the directives implementation, such as the WFD, Flood Directive, Renewable Energy Directive and the Habitats Directive, is needed for these measures to work together. NWRM can be part of this, as these measures aim to integrate water resources management, the reduction of flood risks and the conservation and restoration of aquatic environments. Answers to the following questions should be quickly given:
 - a) How to establish links and exchanges of information between sectors to better integrate different policies?
 - b) How to contact basin managers, politicians, decision-makers, on the various benefits of approaches to restore rivers and NWRM?

- c) How to mobilize and convince partners in other sectors to participate in a restoration project and NWRM?
- d) For better integration, what work scale is needed and why? What tools are available in different countries to facilitate the measures to restore rivers?

2. Better commitment with local communities in ecosystem restoration projects

River restoration projects can bring changes to local people, in their environment and activities; therefore the implementation of restoration projects relies on good communication with and involvement of local communities. It is necessary to share ways to better work with local stakeholders, local decision-makers, local authorities and the general public to raise awareness of the services provided by the restoration and maintenance of aquatic environments and promote education programmes. There still some questions remain:

- a) How to convince and mobilize elected representatives for river restoration and NWRM projects?
- b) How to communicate on river restoration and NWRM, and on what they can do?
- c) How to work with local communities? What tools are available in the various countries that make restoration measures possible?
- d) How to mobilize financial resources for river restoration projects?

The EUROPE-INBO members agree with the conclusions given in the workshop on river restoration.

They noted that lack of knowledge and awareness of the effectiveness and multiple benefits of NWRM remains the biggest obstacle to their implementation on a large scale. In addition, assessments carried out in different planning processes (sector) show the difficulty of jointly assessing the different NWRM benefits and cost-effectiveness in their contribution in achieving the objectives of multiple policies.

This is why it was recommended to publish the summaries and results of the successful projects.

The integration and coordination of planning across sectors and at different levels are vital for many European policies and especially for NWRM. NWRM can make a major contribution to achieving the objectives of the Flood Directive and the Water Framework Directive. Their use should be promoted in future planning cycles of the WFD and Flood Directive. In addition, NWRM can help achieve the objectives of the "Birds" and "Habitats" Directives, e.g. as measures to achieve favourable conservation status, the connectivity requirements of Natura 2000 and the restoration goals of the European Biodiversity Strategy 2020 (Target 2). To take full advantage of the multiple benefits, the selection of the most suitable NWRM is one that takes into account the River Basin Management Plans (RBMP), Flood Risk Management Plans, Natura 2000 Management Plans and the Rural Development Programmes. If we consider that the implementation of large-scale NWRM can be very challenging, particularly with regard to compensation and land consolidation, there is especially a need to coordinate river basin planning with land use management and planning.

Limited financial resources are often considered as a barrier to NWRM implementation. While a variety of funding sources is available at European level and at other levels, the use of these resources to finance NWRM remains limited. In parallel with improved coordination between sectoral planning processes, the combination and integration of different sources of funding would also help to facilitate the large-scale implementation of NWRM.

With regard to the Guidance document on e-flows "we should be reminded that the Blueprint to safeguard Europe's water resources, built on an assessment of progress in Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation in its 1st cycle, stressed the urgent need to better address over-abstraction of water, second most common pressure on EU ecological status, and to recognize that water quality and quantity are intimately related within the concept of "good status"

This would require an EU-wide acknowledgement of the ecological flows, i.e. the "amount of water required for the aquatic ecosystem to continue to thrive and provide the services we rely upon". During the conference, an example of a "roadmap for fish migration" was presented as practical case of the approach of ecological flow.

To achieve this goal, the drafting of a reference document is in progress, as proposed in the Blueprint. It would provide a European definition of the ecological flows and would allow sharing positive experiments.

Roundtable 3 - Implementation and funding of Programmes of Measures

The participants underlined the importance of acting further for consistency between measures to achieve the environmental objectives and the policies and practices of the agricultural sector.

At present, the preparation of the Rural Development Plans (RDP) is of paramount importance for synergy with the WFD. Indeed, these RDPs will establish a financial basis for the years to come (representing up to 20% of the total CAP budget). Indirectly, they will define the ways in which direct and non-point source pressures of agricultural origin will evolve during the implementation of the 2nd WFD management plans. It is therefore of prime importance to act now to take measures for the water and hydro-morphology of rivers. The participants asked the water managers to be closer to their colleagues of the agricultural sectors to: include financing measures that benefit both water and the agricultural sector but also to limit the financing of some measures that could have negative effects on the ecological quality of water bodies, making it even more difficult to achieve environmental objectives. Special attention will be given to the implementation of article 46 of the RDR which relates to the financing of irrigation projects.

It is advisable to ensure that the 2nd and 3rd RBMPs are based on an increasingly exhaustive economic analysis of pressures and adequate quantification of costs and impacts of the measures needed to comply with the objectives of the WFD. For this purpose, it is necessary to establish clear and transparent methodologies, improve common knowledge, but also, if needed, to agree on a practical guide under the CIS to complete and update the WATECO guidance document.

The EU and the Member States should also maintain a high level of financial support for solidarity with the southern countries and the countries neighbouring the EU and support the development of solidarity-based funding for access to water and essential sanitation for reasons of public health but also to avoid the deterioration of water quality.

Roundtable 4: Water governance in Transboundary Basins: WFD International Districts; Role and means of International Commissions; Bi and Multilateral Agreements and Conventions

The Convention on the law relating to the use of international watercourses for purposes other than navigation, adopted by the United Nations in 1997, entered into force on 17 August 2014 with the signing by Vietnam bringing the number of signatories to 35, required number for implementation. The 1997 Convention seeks to ensure the development, conservation, management and protection of international rivers and promotes their optimum use.

With the UNECE Water Convention, international bodies and nations have a strong framework for international cooperation in transboundary basins. Both conventions are complementary: e.g. the 1997 Convention details the factors for fair and reasonable use of water resources, when the 1992 Convention prescribes the content of international agreements and activities to be undertaken jointly.

Members of EUROPE-INBO welcomed its entry into force and reiterated their commitment to see an effective implementation of international conventions for better governance and management of international waters.

Beyond the four roundtable debates, several key themes were dealt with by the participants in the discussions of the conference.

1: Collaborative data management for knowledge development

"Knowledge is a prerequisite to action". Whether at the transboundary, national or basin district scale, good knowledge and easy access to data and information on the status and evolution of water resources and of their use is a key to a successful water policy.

The managers of water resources need regular access to reliable, updated and relevant data and information, to fulfil their missions of operational management, regulation, planning, risk management, public information...

Local authorities, representatives of the different categories of users and associations for environmental protection or working for the public interest, as well as relevant governmental departments should also have access to such information and data to enable their participation in the IWRM-related decision-making process.

Unfortunately, the necessary data are often fragmented/incomplete/dispersed and heterogeneous, and when they do exist, their access is often difficult to organize due to a lack of interoperability between existing information systems: lack of agreements and organizational difficulties for data sharing between institutions, problems of comparability of the data sets made available (semantic interoperability), lack of procedures to facilitate the automatic exchange of data between existing information systems (technical interoperability).

In 2013, field practitioners, decision-makers and members of the EUROPE-INBO group, gathered in a workshop to share best practices for monitoring programmes, particularly insisted on the value of developing tools for data interpretation to better communicate with decision-makers and the general public.

Thus, in addition to enhancement activities carried out at European level under the WISE and SEIS systems, participants in EUROPE-INBO 2014 recommended increasing the exchange of experience on the ways of producing and sharing comparable data among stakeholders at the national level, as well as on the tools and methods used for the analysis and interpretation of data and the dissemination of knowledge to decision makers and the general public.

2: Floods

The Flood Directive requires the drafting of Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) for each area identified as of Potentially Significant Flood Risk (PSFR).

The FRMP must be coordinated in each basin.

The Flood Management Plan must:

- develop appropriate goals for flood risk management in the areas covered by the plan; objectives should focus on reducing the negative impacts of floods on human health, the environment, cultural heritage and economic activity;
- include measures to achieve the identified objectives; the recommendation is to focus, where appropriate, on reducing flood probability and/or on using non-structural measures, including flood awareness and flood forecasting;

- take into account all aspects of flood risk management, with a focus on prevention, protection and preparedness, taking account of the specific characteristics of the river or sub-basin;
- be subject to public consultation and actively encourage the involvement of stakeholders;
- be coordinated and synchronized with the River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs).
- organize and apply the flood protection strategy in particular, by preparing actions in inhabited zones at risk.

The main components of a Flood Risk Management Plan are as follows:

- Conclusion of the preliminary flood risk assessment;
- Flood-prone area maps and flood risk maps;
- Description of objectives;
- Summary of measures and prioritization;
- Description of the cost-benefit methodology, when available, used in a transnational context;
- Description of how the implementation process will be managed;
- Summary of public information and consultation;
- List of competent authorities;
- Description of the coordination process with the WFD.

3: Participation: Better inform the public and decision-makers

The participants are aware of the difficulties raised in several countries to approximate representative democracy and participative democracy.

They reminded that the involvement of stakeholders and the public is critical to improve water resources management and their information and participation in decision-making from the start of the processes should be further developed.

In many countries, measures to be implemented come under the responsibility of local, public or private contracting authorities. It is essential to take all necessary measures to ensure their most active participation in the WFD processes and in the implementation of the programmes of measures.

Appropriation by all users of water policies and of the resulting measures are essential to advance and increase efficiency.

For this purpose, access to monitoring results and knowledge of water and aquatic environments should be facilitated to a wider public. In the case of public participation, these elements are essential to increase the understanding of the challenges ahead and of the efforts needed.

If the efforts, undertaken by Member States for the first WFD cycle, mainly focused on meeting WFD obligations (especially in characterization of water bodies) now, emphasis should be placed on the exploitation and sound use of the produced data, and on their wide dissemination to and appropriation by decision-makers and the general public.

Indeed, current practices are often based on the results from monitoring systems provided to local stakeholders and the public by government services or agencies at the basin level. This dissemination may take place through public meetings, information brochures and/or websites. For each monitoring site, the results are usually provided annually or every two years. The results of the assessment of the status of water bodies are in turn usually released every three years. For better understanding the trends, multiannual graphs are recommended to show the evolutions in space and time.

Beyond these practices, the development of interpretation tools, leading to better communication with decision-makers and the public, also requires some thinking. The monitoring programme could be a communication tool in itself if based on standardized methods improving the understanding, comparison and use of information. In this regard, there is a demand for management charts combining indicators on the status, pressures and responses at the level of sub-basins. These elements could, for example, be downloaded from dedicated websites after geographical selection.

The participants also stressed that the indicators used to characterize the status of water bodies are too general to change on an annual basis. They do not reflect the effectiveness of the actions undertaken during the WFD cycle (6 years). There is also a real need for less aggregated indicators that could be used effectively at local and national level. Such "sub-indicators" would allow elected representatives and the public to better understand the results of the significant efforts made under the WFD. Some progress is expected through new biological and trend indicators.

Finally, the monitoring strategy should be adjustable over time to take account of new technologies, in particular to become (or remain) the most effective regarding WFD requirements.

In addition, the participants were pleased with the launching of the Peer Review mechanism for which basin organizations are called upon either to propose the recipient institution or to provide experts for this work. The network supports the initiative and commits itself to promote it within its activities.

The "EUROPE - INBO 2014" 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 sound proposals to improve the implementation of the WFD and associated Directives in the next cycles, especially for the 2016-2021 period.

The recommendations also fed the preparatory work for the 7th World Water Forum, for the European Region.

In addition, it was also an occasion to organize a new kind of workshop in EUROPE-INBO to share, in a very interactive way, experiences and make recommendations on practices to be reproduced and perpetuated.

The participants thanked Bulgaria and especially Director Nicholas KARNOLSKI for having fulfilled with determination and success the EUROPE-INBO Group presidency during the year 2013/2014.

Ms. Daniela RADULESCU (Romania), was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO Group for the year to come, until the next conference in 2015.

Mr. Jean SCHEPMAN (France) will take charge of the vice-presidency of the Network.

The delegates gratefully accepted the proposal of the Greek Authorities to organize "EUROPE- INBO 2015" conference in Thessaloniki.

They also decided to hold next "EUROPE-INBO conferences in 2016 and 2017, respectively in Lourdes in France and in Dublin in Ireland, at the invitation of the authorities of these two countries to which they addressed all their thanks.

The delegates thanked the Romanian Authorities for their excellent hospitality and for the excellent organization of this 12th Conference.

APPROVED IN BUCHAREST ON 15 NOVEMBER 2014

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

www.inbo-news.org