

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.