

WFD Strategic Coordination Group, Brussels, 8th – 9th November 2011
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Key issues arising

1. COM is now moving forward with action against Member States on water services. COM sees water services as “a wider notion that also includes the restriction of surface waters for navigation purposes.....”. It does not appear at this stage that any other aspects of navigation are intended to be included in the definition. **TG to decide what further action to take.**
2. Science Policy Interface work is ongoing. **TG to consider the benefits of identifying outstanding needs relating to hydromorphology and sediments.**
3. COM presented some initial results of their review of RBMPs. Whilst the significant effort put into Plan preparation by Member States was noted, negative points include the low level of ambition in many plans; extensive use of exemptions; a lack of concrete measures; and the dressing up of ‘business as usual’ as WFD measures.
4. Various initiatives are ongoing *inter alia* to contribute to the Blueprint. These include a new pilot project on ‘pressures and measures’, and consideration of scenarios/targets and of policy options.
5. Green week next year (22nd – 27th May 2012) will be on the theme of ‘water’.
6. COM is ‘still confident’ of having the priority substances proposal out before end 2011.
7. The proposed approach to intercalibration of good ecological potential will be submitted to Water Directors.

Meeting notes

1. Special session on Science Policy Interface (SPI) activity

Onema reported on the launch of an initiative to establish synergies according to policy-relevance. Presentations were given on research supporting WFD ecological status; floods in the context of the Floods Directive; climate change and adaptation; and water scarcity and drought. It was mentioned that provision is needed for involving citizens as well as policy makers in the process; also that there is a need to establish an ‘open culture’ for sharing relevant outputs.

Member states raised questions about how to understand which projects reflect mature (and hence more useful) research and which are in their infancy. Some countries noted ongoing projects amongst those presented which are clearly relevant but which they were previously unaware of. The importance of Member States knowing what is happening early – not only when the results are out – was also stressed.

Outside the meeting, JB asked about apparent gaps in the SPI work in terms of sediment issues, transitional and coastal waters and hydromorphology. PQ advised that these are, in fact, being considered; however, they were not the project presented. **Action: JB to enquire about the extent to which research on relationships between sediment quality and water quality is being considered. TG to consider whether there is an opportunity here to further explore such issues.**

2. Meeting of Water and Marine Directors

The next meeting of Water and Marine Directors will be held in Warsaw, Poland on 8th – 9th December 2011. The Blueprint is key item on agenda.

3. Update on legal issues

Several Member States have now received correspondence from the Commission regarding the definition of water services. COM does not agree that water services are limited to (domestic) water supply and waste water disposal, rather: "The Commission sees water services as a wider notion that also includes water abstraction for the cooling of industrial installations and for irrigation in agriculture; the restriction of surface waters for navigation purposes, flood protection or hydro power production; and wells drilled for agricultural, industrial or private consumption."

Austria asked COM to explain to Water Directors why they are taking this action, what are the substantive reasons, and what are the benefits to the environment. Other Member States are also not happy. Outside the meeting, JB sought clarification from COM as to whether they consider any other aspects of navigation to fall under the definition of water services. It appears that they do not. Most of the conclusions of our earlier discussion paper therefore seem to have been taken into account: however, on impoundments our paper was concluded that water storage for navigation is a temporary use which affects neither quality, nor flow in the medium-long term. **Action: JB to follow papers and presentations to Water Directors meeting. TG to decide whether to take further action?**

WFD 'State of play': 22 countries have now adopted their RBMPs. Adoption is awaited in Denmark; consultation is ongoing or not started in Portugal (all now started), Greece, Spain (some started) and Belgium (some complete).

COM reported on their preliminary assessment of RBMPs: validation is ongoing; there are positive and negative impressions although the latter does not necessarily mean failings. COM remarked that the quality of their assessment will only be as good as the reports themselves. There are a number of problems: the RBMPs and WISE sometimes contain conflicting information; RBMPs make reference to documents which are not available and key documents (e.g. on HMWB designation) were not reported. As an overview of general preliminary findings COM reported the following:

Positive points:

- much effort has gone into plan preparation
- a high uptake of the common framework and common language on water management
- good integration of ecological perspective into water management
- enhanced international cooperation
- public participation and stakeholder engagement
- impressive improvement in the knowledge base

Negative points:

- low ambition in many plans
- extensive use of exemptions
- lack of concrete measures and expected achievements
- lack of comparability (e.g. with regard to chemical status although COM notes the late input of 2008 EQS Directive)
- dressing up 'business as usual' as WFD

COM has started to communicate the preliminary findings to Member States.

COM reports on a new pilot project on 'pressures and measures' which includes several elements:

- Governance and legal aspects – covers administrative arrangements; international coordination mechanisms; enforcement and control; analysis of nature of plans including legal and administrative perspectives – e.g. legally binding or not?

- Development of appropriate methodologies (comparison of typologies; support to intercalibration; specific pollutants which are very variable between Member States; and a reality check (i.e. verification of the results on the ground))
- Integration of water policy into related sectors; WFD Programme of Measures – comparing main pressures and definitions (of significant pressures); a catalogue of measures/effectiveness to cover: agriculture, drivers for HyMo alterations, protection for drinking water; water abstraction and use and mining, waste and old industrial sites.
- Economic aspects – innovation and development of technology; costs and benefits of WFD implementation, including assessment of who is carrying the burden?

The follow up will be analysed in the Blueprint process and through Commission implementation by end 2012.

4. **Blueprint state of play**

The Blueprint is 'about better implementation, better integration and completion (e.g. resource efficiency, climate change)'.

Next steps from the Fitness Check include public consultation; comments from Member States and stakeholders; and a stakeholder workshop in January 2012. A final report is due early 2012.

With regard to the Scenarios and targets for water resource protection, COM's idea is to design a system to cope with different scenarios taking into account climate change, etc. Natural water retention, water savings, re-use and recycling are being explored, as is a water quality 'optimisation model'. Environmental flows and water pricing to different sectors are key considerations. A contract for this work is imminent. EEA are involved and the work is also being managed by JRC. It will include stakeholder meetings in Brussels.

On Policy options, COM is looking at different philosophies of intervention – land-use; behaviour changes, etc. including governance, improving knowledge base, etc. Next steps on this contract which started in September 2011 and is led by IEEP will be a discussion paper available at end November 2011: discussion at the Water Directors' meeting and feedback to be sought from SCG members. Public consultation will start in March 2012 followed by further discussion at the 3rd EU Water Conference in May 2012.

A Blueprint leaflet is available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/pdf/blueprint_leaflet.pdf

5. **Information points**

COM is exploring the need for measures relating to water efficiency in buildings. Policy options are being investigated based on technical and economic feasibility, etc. Various types of measure are being considered including labelling and minimum water efficiency requirements.

Green week next year (22nd – 27th May 2012) will be on the theme of 'water'.

6. **New priority substances**

COM report further delays but they are 'still confident of having a proposal (for new substances, etc.) out before the end of the year.

7. **ECOSTAT**

For rivers the intercalibration exercise is almost complete but there are some gaps notably for the category 'large rivers'. For lakes there are several gaps; and for coastal waters there are 'still

many gaps'. Further, there are no results yet for transitional water bodies, and it is concluded that it is 'not possible' to intercalibrate fish so this will remain open.

Exchange of information on HMWBs is 'a priority for next year' (hydromorphological assessment methods, minimum ecological flow, and more). There will be a hydromorphology workshop next year (12th – 13th June 2012).

Various minor comments were made on the discussion paper on inter-calibrating GEP. JB highlighted the need to take into account natural/physical water body characteristics when deciding which mitigation measures would be 'expected to be in place'.

8. Reporting and WISE

Some discussion took place about improving coordination between data and reporting for the WFD and the Marine Strategy Framework Directive; also the associated use of WISE.

9. WG E Chemical aspects

The Drafting Group Chair provided a report on the Priority Substances Inventory Guidance. The overall objective of the guidance is as a practical and policy tool to improve river basin management. It is intended to help present regionalised information on input loads; also main sources and pathways; to identify background levels; etc. It is also intended to be useful to COM in compiling an EU-wide picture of inputs, and in checking compliance with the reduction and phase-out obligations.

The purposes of the guidance are: to explain the technical and scientific background; to assist Member States in method selection and mid-term planning; and to enable an EU-wide comparison of results. The document gives guidance on 'minimum expectations' for the Inventory. It also promotes and encourages exchange of experiences.

The Inventory should – in principle – cover all 41 substances from Annex 1 of the EQS Directive; however a two-step process is promoted: the first step is to determine which substances are 'relevant' at RBD level so as to direct the detailed effort (Step 2) to the main issues. The Inventory must cover all inputs (point source and diffuse, discharges, emissions and losses) at RBD or sub-unit level (i.e. not at water body level).

The Drafting Group feels that further work would be useful on: exchange of experience (from experienced to inexperienced Member States); hands-on workshops for different approaches; and work to derive emissions factors (e.g. from UWWTPs).

COM indicates that the document will have the status 'guidance' (i.e. it will not be legally binding). COM proposes to forward the Inventory guidance to Water Directors for informal approval but formal adoption will be delayed until at least 2013.

A proposal for a pilot exercise for a 'monitoring watch-list' at EU level was also discussed. The purpose would be to contribute to future risk assessments of emerging pollutants. The project would be coordinated by JRC and the final report would be submitted to WG E for consideration.

10. Climate change and water; water scarcity and droughts

Brief presentations were made on the outcomes of a climate change and agriculture workshop and on a proposed set of indicators for water scarcity and droughts. There was no discussion on ClimWatAdapt project or the proposed navigation and hydromorphology workshop. JB discussed the latter with COM outside the meeting.

Post meeting note: the final report of the ClimWatAdapt project has now been published (see http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/climate_adaptation/climwatadapt_report/proofread_climwatadapt_EN_1.1). It is interesting to note that, despite navigation being excluded from the original ToR, certain climate change implications at least for inland navigation are discussed in the report.

11. Hydromorphology and water

Germany provided a report on the WFD and hydropower workshop held in September 2011. An issues paper has been prepared; presentations are available at <http://www.ecologic-events.de/hydropower2/presentations.htm>. The workshop covered various themes including the application of WFD Article 4(7). Key workshop conclusions were: the WFD can lead to reduction in existing hydroelectricity generation of some 1.5 - 5%; more attention is required to sediment transport issues; and strategic planning is important.

12. Spanish workshop on application of WFD-BHD-MSFD

Spain reported on a workshop held in Madrid designed to promote a coordinated application of WFD-BHD-MSFD. The need for cooperation was discussed to help deliver better synergies. The workshop thus identified the need for better coordination.