

TRANSFER OF IWRM PRINCIPLES TO NON-EU TRANSBOUNDARY RIVER BASINS

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INTRODUCTION

In EU countries where the transboundary waters management is an obligation since the Water Framework Directive (WFD) has come into force, a large quantity of knowledge about related issues has been accumulated, which should be fruitfully reused for the benefit of the transboundary waters management in non-EU countries. The approach of transferring EU knowledge to Third States, described as the WFD/EUWI Joint Process, is the base of the EU external policy regarding water management. This process has been established to reuse the impressive quantity of knowledge acquired during the implementation of the WFD, for enhancing the value of EU inputs, when supporting the implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) in non-EU countries. Efforts to improve the science-policy interface in EU water management as they are carried out in the SPI-Water project (Vaes et al., 2008) will have a direct impact on a quick knowledge transfer to Third Countries. One working group of this project focuses on this issue and wants to show the way for facilitating IWRM results to non-EU countries. Of course the existing knowledge has to be adapted to fit the needs of these countries. This has been shown by phase 1 of the WFD/EUWI JP in the Mediterranean area.

Although various tools and mechanisms are known and used to enhance transboundary water cooperation (i.e. international commissions, basin authorities, arbitration commissions, etc.) joint water management between neighbouring countries is still rare or not really well developed in many regions. SPI-Water project shows Third Countries a way to identify efficient tools for transboundary RB management, how to adapt them to the specific situation in non-EU countries and how to organise transboundary cooperation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKING GROUP ON IWRM KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

The objective of the working group on knowledge transfer to non-EU countries is to facilitate the transfer of IWRM principles, as considered in the WFD, which includes the transboundary river management. For this purpose the main goal of the involved partners is to further adapt and develop the EUWI/WFD Joint

Process to help non-EU countries to better benefit from the knowledge accumulated by EU-countries during the implementation of the WFD.

This is carried out by 4 tasks: 1) Bridging inputs and needs for non-EU countries: a review of recent EUWI/WFD joint process activities and related practices has been made (OIEAU et al., 2007); 2) Detailed description of selected RBs and identification of water management needs: reports on the two non-EU piloted river basin organisations (PRBO) Sebou (Morocco) and Litani (Lebanon) have been written (ABHS et al., 2007; LRA & MENBO, 2007); 3) Matching WFD RTD solutions to the PRBOs needs (WWF et al., 2008) and 4) Development of recommendations (OIEAU et al., 2008).

DESCRIPTION OF RESULTS

1) Review of recent EUWI/WFD joint process activities and related practices

A review on water policy experiences in non-EU countries and especially the recent practices on transfer of knowledge acquired in EU countries towards non-EU countries has been carried out (OIEAU et al., 2007). The aim of this work is to propose a mechanism for helping to implement IWRM/WFD principles in non-EU countries. A desktop review of the processes has been developed as well as direct interviews of the stakeholders. These actions allowed getting an updated picture and a general overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the past knowledge transfer activities.

The main lesson learnt regarding this implementation of the IWRM/WFD principles in non-EU countries is, that a bottom-up and participatory approach has to be promoted, enhancing the interface between the local and national level, the dissemination of the results and the improvement of the capacity training. More initiatives have to be financed in order to set up expert networks and to transfer technologies, analysis tools, etc. EU instruments of cooperation have to be developed and maintained for a sufficiently long time (taking into account the transition phase in which many non-EU countries are currently).

2) Detailed description of pilot river basin organisations and identification of weaknesses

Based on the WFD methodology, a description of each PRBO (Sebou in Morocco and Litani in Lebanon) (ABHS et al., 2007; LRA & MENBO, 2007) has been produced by the PRBOs with the support of several project partners. The reports give a general overview on the administrative framework and the physical, climatic and biotic situation of the PRBOs. Additionally they include a description of the status of IWRM implementation. The WFD Article 5 Reports served as example for these reports. The documents focus on the identification of pressures, characterisation of the actual status of the water bodies and identification of main water management issues. Based on the results a definition of environmental objectives could be established. The authors of both reports put special emphasis on weaknesses in the PRBOs because the main aim of the report was to be instrumental in matching major water management problems and needs of the RBs with solutions from EU experiences. Considering the identified problems and needs, the working group partners searched in the WISE-RTD web portal for tools, initiatives and research done, that offer possible solutions.

3) Matching with WFD RTD solutions to the river basins' needs

Once specific problems and needs have been identified in the PRBOs, a link was made to those RTD projects that propose specific solutions via browsing the WISE-RTD web portal (www.wise-rtd.info). This activity translates into facilitating access to already available information of technical projects and research. The results of this activity have been summarised in a special report (WWF et al., 2008). This document includes: 1) A synthesis of the main water management issues in the PRBOs; 2) A first identification of the potential needs of water authorities in terms of tools and methods that would help improving decisions; 3) A description of the search in WISE-RTD to identify existing guidance, research projects, reports and tools relevant to the practical areas selected; 4) A conclusion on the WISE-RTD web portal, in which the non-EU partners resume their experiences of using the portal.

4) Development of recommendations

In September 2008 detailed and specific recommendations have been published. They serve as guidelines for non-EU countries, which need to focus on IWRM principles, as for example the transboundary waters management, and on how the EUWI/WFD joint process activities can best facilitate the implementation. The recommendations explain how to support the non-EU countries for a better transfer of WFD knowledge. With this objective the SPI-Water project proposes guidelines and recommendations, based on the experiences gained in the frame of the project.

The ten recommendations are: 1) Building a permanent dialogue through a multi-stakeholder platform (scientist, decision' makers from non-EU countries, donors); 2) Ensuring an operational interface open to technological and social innovations: a support team for the Science Policy Interfacing; 3) Identification of problems and needs in non-EU RBs; 4) Extension of WISE-RTD web portal to meet the needs of non-EU RBs; 5) Develop a participatory process of research as a governance of researches; 6) Extending water research programme managers networking (IWRM.Net) to Mediterranean countries; 7) Develop twinning programmes and agreements between RBOs; 8) Promotion and implementation of WFD knowledge via international networking of RBOs; 9) Applying EU-experience in non-EU countries: concrete transfer of knowledge between EU and non-EU countries. (OIEAU et. al., 2008)

To facilitate the transfer of knowledge and information exchange especially in the case of the two PRBOs of the SPI-Water project, four technical visits to EU RBs have been organised as one example for transboundary cooperation. They gave experts of both PRBOs the possibility to learn on-site about specific aspects of their interest from European partners, who face similar challenges. As a result of this visits concrete project proposals on pressing water management issues have been elaborated for both PRBOs.

CONCLUSIONS

The SPI-Water project shows that there is a large need in the transfer of research and experience to the daily practice of water managers. This is not only the case for Europe with respect to the implementation of the WFD, but also outside Europe. The good management of water bodies does not stop at the EU borders and transboundary cooperation outside Europe is appreciated. For that reason a better transfer of knowledge to these countries is needed. The SPI-Water recommendations on how to improve this process want to show the way for a successful transfer of IWRM knowledge to non-EU countries.

More information on the SPI-Water project and the mentioned reports can be found on www.spi-water.eu.

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