

SPI-WATER. SCIENCE-POLICY INTERFACING IN SUPPORT OF THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

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SYMPOSIUM TOPIC

Sharing Data and Information

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INTRODUCTION

The implementation of the Water Framework Directive is based on the basin boundaries which rarely correspond to the boundaries of countries. For that reason a lot of transboundary river basin management plans need to be developed. Furthermore, a lot of knowledge in Research and Technological Development (RTD) as well as implementation experience on water related topics is available in different countries. Other implementer of the WFD could make use of this information and knowledge, for which a transboundary exchange of information and cooperation is needed.

For many years RTD activities have paid more and more attention to incorporating policy relevant topics in their research agendas. Current water-related RTD projects have already established operational links with practitioners, in several catchments / river basins, which allow the needs of policy makers to be taken into account. Moreover, dedicated structures (advisory boards) with the presence of several decision makers have been established in several RTD projects with a view of discussing project results and their significance for policy implementation. However, the experience has shown that this interrelationship is not as effective as it could / should be. The success, for instance, of transferring scientific findings from the research community to operational use by the water managers is in general insufficient. Science-policy integration is one of the most complex challenges that scientific and policy-making communities are facing (Quevauviller et al., 2005).

The SPI-Water project worked out a number of concrete actions to bridge these gaps in communication by developing and implementing a 'science-policy interface', enhancing the use of RTD results in the Water Framework Directive (WFD) implementation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

The general objective of the SPI-Water project is enhancing progress with respect to a science-policy interface in support of the Water Framework Directive implementation, with an impact on the European Water Initiative. In order to achieve this strategic objective, the following project objectives are defined within the SPI-Water project :

1. Analysis and evaluation of projects in the field of river basin management that are of potential use for the WFD implementation.
 - a. To collect scientific knowledge, research results and demonstration projects; to select, based on established criteria, the projects for potential information useful for implementation of the WFD
 - b. To analyse and evaluate the relevance and usefulness of the selected information with respect to the European WFD water policy, the policy implementation tasks and the related milestones in the implementation of the WFD

- c. To promote the obtained results to the end users, in particular in the context of the activities under the WFD Common Implementation Strategy (CIS)
2. Dissemination activities through the use of a science-policy interfacing instrument in the context of the development of WFD river basin management plans
 - a. To develop a science-policy interface linked to the WFD implementation, based on two components: a staffed communication-services centre and an operational WISE RTD Web-Portal
 - b. To establish a reliable and user friendly science-policy interface, by filling the WISE-RTD Web Portal with information collected, analysed and linked with the WFD implementation tasks
 - c. To disseminate the use of the WISE-RTD Web Portal, aiming to provide access to RTD and demonstration project information in the context of the development of WFD river basin management plans
 - d. To involve existing related networks on river basin management in the establishment of the science policy interface
3. Development of EU Water Initiative/WFD joint process activities for facilitating the implementation of integrated water resources management principles in non EU countries
 - a. To review water policy experiences in non-EU countries and to compare with the current WFD practices; to perform a need assessment of 2 Mediterranean river basins
 - b. To study the applicability of WFD practices to non-EU countries and to identify activities for facilitating its implementation in non-EU countries
 - c. To disseminate the obtained results to non-EU countries

This is translated into 4 work packages (WP) of which the first three roughly correspond to the three objectives except for the dissemination activities that are brought together in the 4th work package :

- WP1 : Selection and evaluation of projects
- WP2 : Information management using a Web Portal
- WP3 : Transfer of IWRM principles to non-EU countries
- WP4 : Dissemination activities

SELECTION AND EVALUATION OF PROJECTS (WP1)

An inventory has been made of projects that can be of use for the Water Framework Directive implementation. This list is based on past project within FP5 and FP6 (EC DG-RTD), LIFE (EC DG-ENV, Nature, Third Countries), Interreg III and COST; all projects since 2000 were looked at. These projects were evaluated in order to determine their relevance to the WFD implementation. The relevant projects were linked with specific WFD tasks using the WISE-RTD Web Portal (see WP2).

During this evaluation, it was learned that for many of the relevant projects no website is available anymore. For the LIFE projects, only about 60 % of the investigated projects (still) have a website. For the DG-RTD FP5 and FP6 projects, this percentage is higher to about 80%. When a project is finished, the web information is often not available any more or only during a limited time after the project. When a website is available, this mainly contains the proposal text, expected deliverables, etc. When project results are made available, this is often limited to a summary, and a list of publications. Some websites were found in a language different from English. Information thus is often not available in a format and content that makes an easy access and use possible, in this project for the purpose of science-policy interfacing.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT USING A WEB PORTAL (WP2)

In order to make available and disseminate all RTD results that are useful for the implementation of the WFD, the WISE-RTD Web Portal (www.wise-rtd.info) has been developed by the Harmoni-CA project (www.harmoni-ca.info). The Web Portal supports technically the science-policy interfacing through the bidirectional linking of water-related policies, related implementation tasks, and the available RTD results and tools (Willems & de Lange, 2007). This Web Portal has been further enhanced under the SPI-Water project.

TRANSFER OF IWRM PRINCIPLES TO NON-EU COUNTRIES (WP3)

The objective of the third work package is to facilitate the transfer of IWRM (Integrated Water Resources Management) principles, as considered in the WFD, to non-EU countries. The main objective of this work package is to further adapt and develop the Med 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.

DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES (WP4)

As communication and dissemination are taking a central place in the science-policy interfacing, dissemination activities are assigned an important place in the project. Five workshops are organized, where the WISE-RTD Web Portal and its content are demonstrated to the audience and training given. Hands-on exercises are given on the use of the Web Portal to retrieve information and/or to upload information. For these workshops, local basin specific information was uploaded to the Web Portal.

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 over the country boundaries. This is not only the case for Europe with respect to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive, but also towards non-European countries. The good management of the water bodies does not stop at the (EU) borders and cooperation outside Europe is appreciated.

The difficult transfer of results from research and technology development projects to WFD implementers requires a structured science-policy interfacing system. For this reason the WISE-RTD Web Portal has been established to support the Water Framework Directive implementation. However, further maintenance of the content of the system is of major importance : future research and experiences should be connected and existing information should be maintained. When linking to web information, it was observed that much information gets lost when projects are finished.

The main output of the project is a further developed WISE-RTD Web Portal. Readers are invited to test the prototype system and to find your water related information. When doing so, please send your feedback, through the contact sheet in the Web Portal or via info@spi-water.eu. More information on the SPI-Water project you can be found on www.spi-water.eu.

The final SPI-Water conference will take place in Brussels on 30 and 31 October 2008, where the final results of the project will be presented.

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