WISE-RTD WEB PORTAL AS A TOOL FOR SHARING WATER RELATED RESEARCH INFORMATION

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INTRODUCTION

For many years Research and Technology Development (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. However, the experience has shown that this interrelationship is not as effective as it could / should be. The success 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). Better research integration consequently is required at the various stages of policy development. Because awareness by itself is not sufficient, action is needed. The SPI-Water project proposes a number of concrete actions to bridge the gaps in the 'science-policy communication' by providing and implementing an easy to operate 'interfacing' mechanism. For this interfacing mechanism, use is made of the WISE-RTD prototype Web Portal system developed by the Harmoni-CA Concerted Action supported by DG-RTD of the European Commission (E.C.) under FP5.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT USING A WEB PORTAL

The WISE-RTD 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 is done by linking of the following types of ''information sources'':
- guidances on the application of RTD results and tools for the water policy implementation;
- experiences with this application in case studies (among which real water policy implementations);
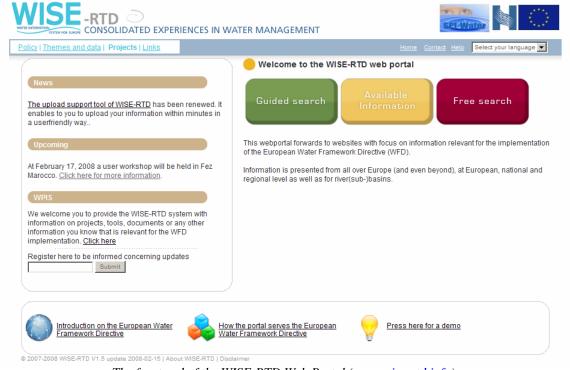- the RTD results and tools itself.

The linking between these guidances, experiences and tools could be realized through the linking with a general list of policy implementation tasks (covering different water-related types of policies; the WFD in this case) and by means of ''keywords'', which cover a list of water-related items and activities (Willems & de Lange, 2007). They are classified in ''Activity related'' keywords (verbs), and ''Context related'' keywords (water-related items). By combining an activity related keyword with one or more context related (or contextual) keywords, a context is specified for the activity. For instance, by combining the keywords ''Identification'' and ''Driving force or pressure'', a more specific activity is considered, dealing with the identification of pressures. When additional context related keywords are added, the activity becomes more specific. For instance, when ''Nutrient loss'' and ''Surface water'' are considered as keywords to the last example, then one deals with the identification of nutrient losses (as a specific type of pressures) to surface waters. The activity is now specified at the more detailed level.

In the concept developed, the linking between the policy implementation tasks, guidances, experiences and tools will be done through keyword combinations. Each of the policy implementation tasks, guidances, experiences and tools can be linked to one of more combinations of keywords.

Based on the above linking principle between information sources, the WISE-RTD Web Portal will provide an intelligent search function. The search function is based on specific water-related issues and caters to various users such as policy-makers, water managers, stakeholders, model specialists, etc. As such, the WISE-RTD Web Portal guides the user to selected international and national scientific projects and initiatives, including those on transboundary waters. An example of the WISE-RTD functionality with respect to transboundary waters is found by a selection on stakeholder participation in water resource management. In transboundary waters mismatch of ecosystem and political-administrative spatial units might lead to difficulties in ensuring integrated water resources management for the entire basin. Therefore, public participation and a clear consensus between stakeholders are necessary for a good implementation of the integrated water resources management principles (as stated in the WFD and the EU Water Initiative). A guided search in the WISE-RTD Web Portal forwards the user to guidance and strategies for stakeholder participation among which a few strategies focus on transboundary river basins. More specific, these transboundary experiences cover the involvement of stakeholders in the water resource management for the Mesta/Nestos catchment and the Danube river basin District. This share of experiences and resources by the WISE-RTD system will support the development of participation procedures in other (transboundary) river basins. Finally, the system intends to provide information with high relevance for a wide range of water related issues.

The WISE-RTD Web Portal has been further enhanced under the SPI-Water project. The water projects, identified during the project, are uploaded to the Web Portal in order to achieve a critical mass of water related information. A Web Portal Input System has been developed in order to support the upload of information and the linking of this information with keywords and/or water policy implementation tasks. In order to do so, a smart list of classification items has been developed, which are cross-related to both the list of available keywords in the Web Portal and the list of water-policy (i.e. WFD) implementation tasks. This Web Portal Input System guides the user in linking its own research and/or experience with the proper keywords to the system.

In March 2007, the WISE-RTD Web Portal became part of the WISE system of the E.C. (Water Information System for Europe, www.water.europa.eu), i.e. "projects" part next to the "policy" and "themes and data" parts.

The front end of the WISE-RTD Web Portal (www.wise-rtd.info).

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. 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 this interfacing. In the context of transboundary river basins, the portal can be used to find guidance (both general and technical), experiences or examples from several river basin, and tools, in order to support integrated water resources management in these basins.

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. The main output of the project is a further developed WISE-RTD Web Portal, catering for an efficient and easy to use tool for dissemination as well as retrieval of RTD results. Readers are invited to test the prototype system and to find their 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 can be found on www.spi-water.eu.

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