

“The Spanish EU presidency’s perspective on the European water policy”

Report on the 3rd meeting of the Intergroup Water of 7 April 2010

INTERGROUP WATER

PRESIDENT:

Richard SEEBER (EPP)

VICE PRESIDENTS:

Judith MERKIES (S&D)

Holger KRAHMER (ALDE)

Satu HASSI (Greens)

Robert STURDY (ECR)

Marisa MATIAS (GUE)

Anna ROSBACH (EFD)

SECRETARIAT:

Durk KROL (EUREAU)

secretariat@intergroupwater.eu



The 3rd meeting of the Intergroup Water was dedicated to the perspective of the Spanish Presidency’s perspective on the European Water Policy with a special focus on water scarcity and droughts. Keynote speakers were Ms. Marta MOREN ABAT, General Director responsible for water in the Spanish Ministry of Environment, Agriculture and Rural Development and Mr. Peter GAMMELTOFT, head of the Water Unit at DG Environment. The meeting was very well attended with more than 80 participants from a wide range of organizations with an interest in water issues, including Members of the European Parliament and representatives from different services of the European Commission. The attendees and speakers were welcomed by the President of the Intergroup MEP Dr. Richard SEEBER and Ms. Klara SZATKIEWICZ, President of EUREAU who also presented the water utilities concerns regarding water scarcity and droughts.

Ms. Klara SZATKIEWICZ - Water operator's concerns about climate change

Ms. SZATKIEWICZ observed that water operators are heavily impacted by water scarcity and drought; it has both consequences for the quantity of drinking water resources (flood and droughts) and for the quality of the raw water because of higher pollutant concentrations. An additional challenge is the ongoing demographic change with population migrations and urban sprawling resulting in higher population densities in some areas.

To address this challenge she pleaded for a **twin-track approach**, balancing demand-management and supply-management, including a more efficient water capture and less waste of water. The water available can be maximized through aquifer recharge, desalination, water re-use, rainwater harvesting and also sustainable urban drainage. On the demand side, she said that already a lot has been done to curtail water abstractions despite a growing number of connections to the network resulting in significant reductions. A few examples of measures are the gradual implementation of the user-pays-principle through water metering and more water efficient tap-fittings and household equipment. Increase of the water price is a more sensitive issue because of obvious social issues and due to low price elasticity. Very important here is the need for education and the raising of the awareness of customers.


She also mentioned the need for a continued attention to water losses in all sectors: a lot of figures are quoted, but this far, we are missing a proper large scale analysis. Talking about the specific issue of drinking water networks leakage reduction, the possibilities depend on a large variety of local environmental, technical and economical factors; clarity is also to be made on the difference between water losses and the not-accounted for water (e.g. water used by firefighters): the strategy for leakage reduction needs to make the best use of scattered elements in a coherent 'asset management'.

In conclusion she observed that Europeans benefit from a high level of drinking water services and that water services cannot be handled as an experimental field at large. She urged the decision makers to closely protect this asset.



Views of the Spanish Presidency on Water policy in Europe: Focus on Spain

Marta MOREN ABAT
Water Director
Ministry for Environment, Rural and Marine Affairs



LINES OF ACTION

Driven by the implementation of Water Framework Directive

1) Water governance


- Specificities of water management requires definition of direct and indirect interactions.
- Cross sectorial approach, environmental requirements, economical and social considerations and possible administrative constraints
- The need of coordination between the different policy levels
- Interaction between public and private sector
- Transparency, information and public involvement



LINES OF ACTION

2) Planning Process: implementation of WFD

- Hydrological basin plans already in place in Spain since 90's. (and early)
- The need to adapt requirements of WFD
- River Basin Management Plans
- Unity of management and hydrological boundaries
- Transboundary coordination
- Cross policy effects and the need of planning in other policy areas
- Good Ecological Status at the same time that socio-economical development: The need of adequate measures



LINES OF ACTION

2) Planning Process: implementation of WFD

- To follow the right path: Ambition on the results entails difficulties on the process.
- Finalization of RBMPs ongoing
- Open dialogue with all actors involved
- Delays on delivering River Basin Management Plans



LINES OF ACTION

3) Conciliation between water uses and Good Ecological Status

- Water uses: Agriculture needs in the Mediterranean basins and the center of Spain. In northern basins quality issues related to urban and industrial uses are relevant.
- The right balance: To find progressive adaptation between the needs and the requirements of WFD. Use of programs of measures and opportunities that WFD offers.
- Important items: Ecological flows, fulfillment of requirements of water Legislation (e.g. 91/271/EC, 91/676,...) besides 60/2000/EC.
- Strong efforts on process.



LINES OF ACTION

4) Implementation of policies

- Water use on agriculture: Specific plan of efficient water and energy use for irrigation systems, water saving requirements, concrete environmental benefits, use of renewable energies,
- Water pollution Control: Control of waste water discharges Plan, implementation of Urban waste water Directive, good agricultural practices.....
- Water Reuse Programme
- New water sources (when possible and needed): Water reuse and desalination
- River Restoration Plan
- Cost recovery policies
- Involvement of society
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LINES OF ACTION

5) International relations: Latin-American and Mediterranean region

- Water Strategy in Latin-America: Programme on Water lead by water directors.
- Strategy for Water in the Mediterranean region: Expected to be approved on the Ministerial Conference on Water on the 13th April 2010 in Barcelona.
 - Strategy based of 4 pillars, identifies gaps and needs and ways of action
 - Setting of next steps to follow : Action Plan
 - Workshop on the 12th and 14th April to present and discuss specific topics with all actors involved

LINES OF ACTION

6) Management of extreme events

Floods:

- Implementation of flood risk directive

Droughts:

- Relevant experience: several episodes, last one 2004-2005.
- Drought management plans
- Priority under the Spanish Eu-Presidency: Conference of water Scarcity and droughts

International Conference on Water scarcity and Droughts

Conclusions

Conclusions

Water scarcity and drought → Severe problems in many regions in Europe and not limited to specific areas
 Frequently in densely populated areas
 European Strategy launched in 2007

Climate change → Magnify regional differences

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The White Paper on climate change establish a framework to reduce vulnerability

Conclusions

Mitigation → Environmental, social and economic impacts are inevitable

Common Agriculture Policy and others → Opportunity to promote more efficient and sustainable water use

Milestones of the Conference → European strategy on WS&D
 Communication on the EC on WS&D
 Conclusions of the Council of the EU in 2007
 Exchange of views and practices
 Provide a platform for discussions

Conclusions

Fresh water availability is likely to decrease → One of the biggest challenges to achieving the objective of good status of water bodies

Regional sustainable development → Essential to deal with water scarcity and drought

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Integration of sectorial policies

Transboundary waters → Risks, challenges and solutions shall be shared

Conclusions

Reliable data → Support policy and management decisions

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Support the research
Enhance the collaboration and coordination between research and policy

Drought Management Plans in complete harmonisation with the RBMP → Essential to guarantee the adequate and sustainable water management

Drought and water scarcity plans part of WFD plans and measures

Conclusions

2012 →

- Review and further develop the evolving EU Strategy on water scarcity and droughts
- Report on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive
- Climate Change Adaptation Strategy

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An **opportunity** to take into account the new **challenges** that we are facing to **manage** water scarcity and drought

Thank you for your attention!

Mr. Peter GAMMELTOFT, Head of Water Unit, DG Environment, European Commission

- Introduction to the **Water Framework Directive (WFD)**: it was introduced in the middle of 1990 as a response to the bad quality of Europe's rivers, lakes and groundwater and its impact on the aquatic environment and on water users. The main objective: improvement of the water quality.
- The WFD has meant a major reform of water governance and a move away from the traditional view that water should be seen only as a problem for engineers. In terms of governance it introduced the idea of management of water by river basins in both national and transboundary river basins, joined-up management of all 'pressures and all impacts', transboundary cooperation extensive public consultations. Moreover, water is regarded as a common good, for which free, unrestrained access leads to wastage and inefficient use; therefore a pricing mechanism is needed.
- The WFD introduced a binding target of achieving **good ecological quality** by 2015 and as the main vehicle to deliver this target it introduced the requirement of **River Basin Management Plans (RBMP)** to be developed for each River Basin and adopted by Member States by the end of 2009.
- In recent years it has become clear that water scarcity and droughts are on the increase in Europe due to that fact that often economic and demographic development may require more water (industrial development, tourism development, etc), thus putting water resources under significant stress; This stress is exacerbated due to the impacts of climate change through changes in temporal and spatial availability of water.
- The Commission adopted a **communication in 2007 on water scarcity and drought**: The main remedy proposed in this communication was improvements in **water efficiency** across all sectors. One study commissioned by the Commission shows that through simple technical methods, with no drastic or structural changes, we could save 40% of current water consumption in Europe. This means that there is a significant scope for increasing water efficiency. But efficiency is not **enough**: the quality of the rivers should be maintained in good ecological status to ensure that the water is available for human, ecological and economic purposes and there is a need to **balance demand and supply** of clean water, water savings should therefore be used to ensure that overdrafts in our rivers and groundwaters are compensated so that we can maintain good water quality for human and economic purposes. There are serious constraints on social and economic development if there is not enough water. This could raise the issue of the choice of sectors in which the economic development should take place and for which access to sufficient water resources needs to be provided. One such discussion is the ongoing debate about whether in water scarce areas, water should as a priority be provided to produce food for a rapidly growing global population rather than biomass for energy purposes.
- The work on water efficiency is directly linked to the EU2020 strategy and its component concerning resource efficiency. Water is one of the key elements in the resource efficiency strategy for providing a more sustainable Europe by 2020.
- The Commission intends in 2012 to present a **'Blueprint for Safeguarding Europe's Water'** with three main pillars:
 - o A review of the implementation of WFD and its main components by Member States. How well the River Basins Management Plans are being implemented to reach the targets of the Directive and how other policies are helping to achieve it;
 - o Review of water scarcity and droughts policy, to measure the progress made since the 2007 communication and to set out the need for further policies and measures.
 - o An assessment of the likely impacts of economic, demographic and climate change factors on the achievement of legislative and policy targets for water. This is also linked to the

assessment of Europe's ability to cope with climate change as set out in President Barroso's political guidelines for the new Commission.

- The **actions** to be taken:

1. **Good housekeeping.** Proper implementation of the WFD and proper implementation of the RBMP, including implementation of water pricing provisions. The idea behind water pricing is not so much the provision of finance for infrastructure as it is to put a break on the appetite for more water, but there is still the question of whether this is sufficient to provide the necessary controls on water demand;
2. **A Water Hierarchy** is necessary in a water constrained world as set out in the 2007 communication. The idea of the water hierarchy means that one should exploit fully the potential for water savings through increased water efficiency before considering increasing supply through additional infrastructure. The solution of water transfers is very costly and can create social, economic and ecological problems where the water is taken.
3. **Efficiency measures** are important for the sectors that develop the techniques and methods as they represent potential business opportunities for them. All sectors need to provide efforts to improve water efficiency.
 - Efficiency needs to be improved in agriculture as the main water consuming sector in most water scarce areas. Making the agricultural sector participate as actively as possible in stakeholder discussions and explaining the benefits for the sector in improved water efficiency is therefore important. We have had reports that in Australia improving the water efficiency has improved both outputs and profits in agriculture.
 - The water industry will need to improve water efficiency through reduction of leakage from water distribution systems and to develop the re-use of water and waste water where appropriate.
 - The Commission is also considering how water efficiency of buildings can be improved – possibly through a directive on the water efficiency of buildings. Improvements in water efficiency could e.g. come about through changes in the management of run-off from roofs and other surfaces.
 - Consideration also needs to be given to improving the water efficiency of water using equipment such as washing machines, dish washers, taps and shower heads.
4. **Drought management plans:** good planning is essential, both to minimize and manage impacts on society and water users, and to minimize impacts on the quality of water bodies.
5. **EU policies** have a significant impact on both water quality and of the quantitative status of water bodies.
 - **Agriculture:** Cross-compliance and Rural Development Funding are two key areas to ensure compliance with water legislation and policies. It will be important to strike the right balance between mandatory rules subject to cross-compliance and rural development funding. The Health Check in 2008 brought "modulation" to the agricultural budgets by moving funds from pillar one to pillar two of the CAP. The Budget Review and the subsequent new Financial Perspectives (mid 2011) will define the budget available for water measures in agricultural funds for the period beyond 2013. And the review of the CAP for the period after 2013 will set the framework for future agricultural support measures.
 - **Regional Funding:** The Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund can contribute to achieving water policy targets, each in their area. Again, the Budget Review and the subsequent new Financial Perspectives (mid 2011) will define the budget available for water measures in these funds for the period beyond 2013.
 - **Solidarity fund:** Firstly, it is important to note that the purpose of this fund is not to compensate for damage, but only to ensure the establishment of emergency services to ensure the health, safety and security of citizens in case of disasters. The

solidarity fund provided support to Cyprus during the 2008 drought. However, apart from the technical difficulties in defining temporal and spatial extension of a drought, the overall funds available for this purpose are currently very limited and there is a known concern among Member States relating to budgetary discipline with respect to this fund. The overall sum available for this purpose is also likely to be defined in the Budget Review and the Financial Perspectives.

- Finally, it should be kept in mind that the current EU funding systems leaves Member States with the final decisions about their **choice of priorities** within a very wide menu of options. Making money available for water issues in the current system provides little incentive to ensure that Member States decide to use the money for these purposes. Thus Member States have a large degree of freedom to choose whether to use funds for e.g. waste water treatment plants vs. motorways or for farm modernization vs. water efficiency improvements.

5. Finally, **land use**: has a very significant impact on water. Changes in land use drives both the natural availability of water and the demand for water. This is an area where much new knowledge is currently emerging. An example of where we may need a change of practices is in the management of water that falls on the land through rain: for many years standard practice in Europe has been to get rid of it and send it back to the sea as soon as possible. Increases in water stress and in the frequency and severity of droughts means that we need to consider how to retain water on the land and avoid running back to the sea. We therefore now need to consider how to 'retain' water and increase its availability – both in our cities and in the countryside e.g. by infiltrating run-off water into the soil instead of discharging it through sewers and by reconsidering the rural drainage systems introduced over the last century or so to have marginal increases in the size of agricultural land and through the re-establishment of multipurpose river floodplains to provide clean water, water availability, biodiversity and flood protection.