



**RESEAU INTERNATIONAL DES ORGANISMES DE BASSIN
INTERNATIONAL NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANISATIONS
RED INTERNACIONAL DE ORGANISMOS DE CUENCA**

EURO INBO

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EUROPEAN WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE

—◆—
**KRAKOW (POLAND)
27 – 29 SEPTEMBER 2004**

FINAL RESOLUTIONS

126 representatives of the governmental administrations responsible for managing water resources and of the basin organizations or water authorities coming from **32 countries**, Belgium, Belarus, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Morocco, Moldavia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Senegal, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Tunisia, Ukraine and International Commissions (Moselle-Sarre, Scheldt, Oder, Helsinki, Oder), GWP CEE and the European Commission, **met in Krakow, on 27 and 28 September 2004**, under the auspices of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO) and of the Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organizations (CEENBO), at the invitation of the Polish Ministry of the Environment and Polish RZGWs.

PREAMBLE:

Many organizations here represented are already members or observers of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), currently present in 52 Countries. INBO was created in 1994 in Aix-les-Bains to enable the mobilization of the real and practical experience of decision-makers and professionals of the administrations and organizations concerned, directly responsible for the effective implementation of integrated water resource management at the level of river basins or wishing to implement it in their respective countries or regions.

In Europe, INBO now relies on Regional Networks in Central and Eastern Europe (CEENBO) and in the Mediterranean (MENBO) and on the Network of International Commissions and Transboundary Basins Organizations.

In the member or candidate countries of the European Union, the implementation of the Water Framework Directive has entered since 2002 in an active and operational phase, which directly involves the existing Basin Organizations or the «district authorities» being created, that are facing many practical and effective problems in its field implementation.

The Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) organized around Working Groups led by the European Water Directors and the European Commission, allowed the production of many very interesting and useful orientation documents for a common understanding of the various aspects of the WFD; these guidance documents were also tested in about fifteen pilot basins distributed on the whole territory of the European Union and in Candidate Countries.

Numerous and interesting studies and works were also developed in other districts, and it is interesting for them to exchange on difficulties encountered, results or very operational and concrete experiences accumulated in the field.

During the INBO meeting of Valencia, Spain, 11 and 12 November 2003, it appeared that there was a need for informal exchanges of practical experiences between the volunteer Basin Organizations, in addition to the official European platform. That is the reason why, it was decided to organize, within the Network, an open group of European basin organizations, called « **EURO INBO** », for the implementation of the WFD, without creation of any new structure or particular framework.

INBO activities must indeed be complementary to ongoing efforts and must avoid setting up parallel or competing structures.

The « EURO INBO » working group aims at enriching the common strategy for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) without duplicating work already done.

The « EURO INBO » meeting of Krakow thus aimed at enriching and broadening the experience of the pilot basins by also presenting different approaches and mentioning the very pragmatic questions, which arise in other European Districts.

The objective is to facilitate process in the field by direct contacts between the public bodies in charge which would be or are yet interested in our group, created on a voluntary basis and free involvement. It is also important to point out the fact that a great number of them are also coming from Eastern Europe, NIS or Mediterranean countries where interest for the WFD is obvious.

49 papers were presented during the Krakow meeting.

GENERAL ISSUES :

Five topics have been dealt with in this 1st meeting of the « EURO INBO » Group of European Basin Organizations in Krakow, on 27, 28 and 29 September 2004.

1- Status of the Districts initial characterization :

Since the passing of the WFD, the designated Authorities undertook much technical work focused on the delimitation of Districts then of water bodies. In parallel (or consecutively), the analysis of pressures and impacts was carried out to characterize the districts.

At this stage, it is useful to initiate a wide exchange of experiences on the methods used to assess the pressures and impacts at the level of the Districts, in order to compare and better harmonize the different approaches.

The evaluation of pressures (the significant pressures at first) and of their impacts in 2015 (and later on) must be assessed through evolution scenarios. The experience in this field is rather new and better exchanges between District Authorities on this topic should allow progress to be made.

Finally, it is necessary to start the steps, which will follow the completion of the initial characterization, especially the implementation of Article 14 of the WFD. The definition of the main issues which arise at the District level is the first step. It must be based on the results of initial characterization and become the starting point of the preparation of programs of measures.

Article 14 also introduce the concept of active involvement of the « parties concerned » and of public consultation. These topics were already diversely experimented in various pilot basins. It is essential to continue and widen the discussion on these topics because of their increasing significance in the WFD planning process.

It should be stressed that a common conclusion of all countries in their initial characterization work is that agriculture will, in many cases, be the limiting factor to achieving the environmental objectives.

2- Economic component of the WFD :

In addition to the use of evolution scenarios for producing the initial characterization, first approaches were presented aiming at estimating the current cost recovery by sector (domestic subscribers, industry, agriculture). The works and the existing economic data vary a lot depending on the Member State. In most of them, data collection is organized by administrative area and consistency problems may arise with the new District concept. Moreover, these data are often highly incomplete and an exchange of experiences on the methodologies used or planned for in the various Districts will be particularly useful, as the economic analysis will be of prime importance for identifying the « heavily modified water bodies ».

Finally, it is advisable to already prepare the following step of formulating programs of measures planned for in the WFD. The use of economic tools is also essential for choosing the measures by using cost-effectiveness analyses or for estimating the costs for integrating the provisions of the former directives in these programs.

3- Environmental objectives and the « good ecological status » in particular :

The main objective of the WFD is to achieve « good ecological status for water bodies » in 2015.

The concept of « good ecological status » was the topic of an orientation document adopted during the meeting of the Water Directors in Dublin; no progress has yet been made towards a normative presentation, but the presentations during the meeting showed that it was not an essential condition for elaborating working methodologies to evaluate the ecological status of water bodies, for following them up and identifying the risks of non achieving « good status ».

It is advisable to emphasize the particular significance of the inter-calibration exercise which is being set up at the European level, in order to harmonize methodologies and results. Presentations during the Krakow seminar stressed the complementarity between methods, either based on a scientific analysis and models or a participatory approach with mobilization of local practical experience. It is essential to combine a pragmatic approach based on field experience, local stakeholders involvement and results from existing tools and data in order to identify the main issues.

4- The transboundary basins :

There are many transboundary basins in Europe and almost all the Countries, except the islands of course, are concerned at least partly. For some of them, all their surface waters come from or go out to a nearby country, member or not of the European Union. All kinds of case do exist from mere bilateral cooperation and to the extreme situation of the Danube basin, which includes 18 countries.

The implementation of the WFD obviously leads to a larger harmonization of the management practices and tools between the riparian Countries, including those that are not or not yet members of the EU.

It may also lead to modify or complement the existing international treaties or agreements to make them compliant with the new concepts or obligations of the WFD, such as, for example, the « good ecological status » principle, the formulation of a management plan for the whole basin, the improvement of means for flood prevention and control, the coordination of measures against accidental pollution, etc.

The role, responsibilities and the means available to the international commissions, either existing or to be created, were also underlined.

Working methods are similar : bottom-up and/or top-down procedures, decisions obtained by consensus, appropriation by dialogue, possible role of preventing and regulating conflicts,

The participants recommended to make use and strengthen the existing international structures, because:

- good results have already been obtained within these structures between EU and non-EU members
- those structures provide platforms to define eco-regions and groups of water bodies
- of the experience gained in collecting, exchanging and using coordinated data used for the assessment of pressures and impacts
- of experience in implementing common assessment of international adopted measures
- it ensures integrated ecological water management for river basins or international eco-regions
- it brings socially, economically and environmentally added-value compared to independently taken measures

5- Flood prevention and control :

Although this topic is not included in the cases covered by the WFD, in 2002, the Water Directors wished to progress on common approaches on flood prevention and good management practices. A Guide of good practices was drafted in 2003 and adopted during the meeting of the Water Directors. The Dutch Presidency of the European Union has included this topic in European work and the informal Council of the Environment of July 2004 was devoted to it. A paper prepared by the Commission on the management of flood hazards was presented.

The participants admitted that there is a need to exchange information and know-how in the field of the management of flood hazards and to support initiatives promoting inter-governmental, inter-sectoral and transboundary cooperation and exchanges on this matter. This approach should enable the sharing of know-how and the follow-up of good practices.

The Basin Authorities are particularly interested in this significant component of integrated basin management. Some of them have already planned to include a related section in their future plan. Many plans on this topic already exist for various basins. The presentation of experiments and ambitions in this field, enabled to underline the advantage of implementing European common action plans and tools, especially for transboundary river basins.

RESOLUTIONS:

Generally speaking, the participants considered very favorably the progress made allowing a better understanding of the WFD and of its instruments on the one hand, and on the other the significant progress already made in the first stages of its implementation.

The organizations participating in the « EURO-INBO » group expressed their wish to continue exchanging their experiences through four complementary activities:

- Organizing regular meetings, either yearly plenary sessions or thematic workshops whenever necessary. Apart from an exchange of experiences, these meetings will result in the identification of the main concerns of basin organizations involved in the practical implementation of the WFD.
- Developing the «EURO INBO» website on the basis of methodologies, techniques and contents already elaborated within AQUADOC INTER (in Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania) and EMWIS (Mediterranean region). The website could include case studies and documents produced by basin organizations such as the « initial characterizations » for the end of 2004 (abstract in English, links with the sites of the basin organizations). This site would also include current information, a forum for discussions and frequent asked questions, links towards new documents and information sources produced at the European level.
- Promoting training programs for executives and staffs of Basins Organizations.
- Establishing twining arrangements between basin organizations of different countries facing common problems, notably within the « TWINBASIN » project or existing agreements.

The organizations represented in Krakow expressed their full support to the Pilot River Basins exercise developed under CIS during the first phase ending in 2004. The « EURO INBO » group recommends its members to propose new pilot basins for testing in the second phase of CIS starting in 2005. The Delegates also recommend to enlarge the direct dissemination of PRB (Pilot River Basin) results to all other basin organizations. Generally speaking, in spite of the web facilities, access to information remains complex.

As regards transboundary basins, it seems necessary to support the creation of International Commissions or provide better means to those already existing, and to reinforce cooperation with countries bordering EU (Candidate countries, NIS countries and Balkans), through projects supported by the European Commission,

□ As regards the specific aspects of the prevention and control of floods which heavily affect many European countries, the delegates confirmed that there is a need to better exchange information and know-how and that it is essential to harmonize the control plans between the countries of transboundary basins. They support the proposal to initiate exchanges between operational Centers for flood control and prevention. In this field, the recent paper of the European Commission should be considered as the basis for future initiatives.

Compatibility between the WFD and flood control in heavily affected areas should especially be looked for.

□ Consistency of the water monitoring and information systems, harmonization of data and Geographic Information Systems and the use of common models are essential for sharing information and following up actions, in transboundary basins as a priority.

□ A joint thinking on the methods and means for consultation of the general public and for the processing of the received opinions is urgent. It would also be very useful to jointly formalize strong and easily appropriable arguments likely to justify a real interest and an effective participation of the general public, whose approval is essential for the consultations on the actions and projects related to water policy in the basins.

□ At this stage of their first exchanges, the delegates already stressed several main concerns of interest for future exchanges of experiences:

- Specific implementation of the WFD in islands,
- Water management in areas with current or past mining activities,
- Treatment of historic and future pollution and its impact on the resources and environments (polluted sites and soils, mines subsidence, sediments, phytosanitary residues, invading species, etc.),
- Design of an iterative and dynamic approach for formulating programs of measures, taking into account the existing and future data without delaying the actions to be implemented in the short term,
- Link between the WFD implementation and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy. Improvement of consistency between different official aid for agriculture and the environment,
- Institutional organization of the District Authorities according to their specific constraints, for supporting a better convergence for the effective implementation of the WFD,

- Need for regular information of the District Authorities on the progress made in European work on the definition of « good ecological status »,
- Effects of the classification of Water Bodies and designation of protected areas on future regional planning and development,
- Economic aspects: consolidation of the information already collected, creation of databases and exchanges at the level of the international districts, tools for public consultation, training of specialists,
- Improving knowledge of hydrobiology and hydro-morphology.

The participants thanked the representative of the European Commission for inviting the « EURO-INBO » group to present the conclusions of the Krakow meeting to the Committee of the European Water Directors. It will be a great honor for the group of European Basin Organizations, which confirms its willingness to be fully associated to the CIS process as the other partners already involved.

The « EURO-INBO » group reminds that the European Commission is permanently invited to its meetings and works together with the Water Directors of all interested countries.

The delegates thanked the Polish Ministry of the Environment and RZGWs for having initiated this first meeting and for their perfect organization of the meeting and their warm welcome in Krakow.

Mr. Mieczysław OSTOJSKI, Polish Water Director, will chair the « EURO INBO » group up to its next plenary assembly.

The delegates retained the proposal from the Walloon Region and basins organizations of the Meuse international district to organize the next plenary meeting of EURO INBO in Liege, in Belgium in Autumn 2005.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED IN KRAKOW ON 28 SEPTEMBER 2004.