



Using the results of WFD Monitoring programmes - An European review of communication tools

EUROPE-INBO 2014

Working document

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1. FOREWORD

The "EUROPE-INBO" group, created in Valencia, Spain, in 2003 by the European Basin Organizations of INBO for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD), aims at enriching the implementation of water policies in Europe and the CIS works, through analyses directly resulting from the interested parties in the field. Indeed the "EUROPE-INBO" Group allows the Basin Organizations and District Authorities to regularly meet, in an informal way, for exchanging their practical experience, identifying the operational problems, making specific proposals for the WFD implementation, and disseminating the principles and tools of the European water directives to the EU neighbouring countries.

After Valencia (Spain) in 2003, the "EUROPE-INBO" group held annual plenary assemblies: Krakow (Poland) in 2004, Namur (Belgium) in 2005, Megève (France) in 2006, Rome (Italy) in 2007, Sibiu (Romania) in 2008, Stockholm (Sweden) in 2009, Megève (France) in 2010, Oporto (Portugal) in 2011, Istanbul (Turkey) in 2012 and Plovdiv (Bulgaria) in 2013.

The EUROPE-INBO Group is currently chaired by Bulgaria, East Aegean River Basin Directorate, until the next annual conference which will be organised in Bucharest, Romania (12-14th of November 2014).

Capitalising on its past activities, EUROPE-INBO Group is proposing to involve all interested River Basin Authorities and Districts Competent Authorities in a collaborative work and permanent sharing of information about WFD implementation and river basin management planning.

The ultimate goal would be:

- to enable "horizontal" quick exchange of best practices by connecting people from different RBDs throughout Europe working on the same themes related to the implementation of the WFD;
- to strengthen the "vertical" communication between decision makers at European level and field practitioners from River Basin Authorities.

EUROPE-INBO is proposing to organise the exchanges in 2014 around two topics which appear as important issues in the context of implementing PoMs and preparing the second RBMPs:

- ***Communication to stakeholders based on monitoring results***
- ***River restoration and Natural Water Retention Measures (NWRM)***

These two themes are proposed to be studied in link with the CIS activities. Some others may be identified and planned later on, and the SCG members have been invited to propose additional subjects.

In any case, after preparatory work conducted mainly through electronic exchanges, the topics selected will be addressed within the EUROPE-INBO yearly conference (through dedicated workshops for some of them), and the results presented to the SCG or relevant CIS working groups later on. The EUROPE-INBO secretariat will liaise with the relevant CIS working groups when necessary, in order to make sure that no overlaps occurred and potential interest of working groups' members are identified.

The objective of this note is to launch the work on the first topic:

Communication to stakeholders based on monitoring results

Reports from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) show how the Member States dealt with RBMPs during the first cycle especially for surveillance programmes and WB characterisation. Through this reporting process, the Commission ranked MS regarding the number of water bodies reaching the good or better ecological status, using the results sent directly by the Member States themselves through the WISE platform. Indicators used to release these rankings are currently discussed because of their low ability to show, alone, concrete progress in the restoration of the ecological status of aquatic environments.

In this context and regarding preparation of the second WFD river basin management plans, which include a review of the surveillance networks and programmes, a dedicated workshop was organized in the frame of the yearly conference of the EUROPE-INBO (November 13, 2013, Plovdiv, Bulgaria). The participants from various MS Directorates and Basin Organisations have identified important recommendations and good practices during the workshop that can be found in the workshop report. They also identified important questions for further investigation, which are:

- How to better deal with the One Out All Out principle (1OAO) in order to show the progress achieved on WB ecological status;
- Communication tools: how to communicate the results to the decision-makers and to the general public.

This note aims at preliminarily express the stakes and main identified questions on this common issue: how to use the results from the surveillance networks to communicate to the decision-makers and the public on the progress achieved regarding WB ecological status.

This note will serve as a background document and will be enriched from the exchanges that will occur within the EUROPE-INBO network enabling to identify the best practices and the difficulties faced by different countries or basins.

2. USE AND DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS FROM SURVEILLANCE PROGRAMMES

What are the information and tools used by the MS to communicate the results from programmes of measures to all players in the water policy, from public to decision-makers through all stakeholders?

2.1. Context

Each Member State has to develop methods to assess ecological status for all required biological quality elements. Methods have to be developed for the whole quality elements to give a holistic picture of the ecological status of the water bodies. The ecological status of each water body is determined by the quality element having the lowest status class, according to the **one-out-all-out principle**. This principle is established to ensure that the negative impact of the most dominant

pressure on the most sensitive quality element is not averaged out and obscured by minor impacts of less severe pressures or by less sensitive quality elements responding to the same pressure.

Beyond WFD requirements, surveillance programme is a powerful instrument to support water policy. This is a key element allowing acquiring general knowledge on water quality and also on human activities pressures through data analyses. It must be taken into account and integrated in the planning process in order to set up and control objectives and actions, at the national or local level, all this being useful to enlighten decision makers for orienting water policy and deciding on specific measures to be implemented.

Public involvement is a key element requested by the WFD. The first step was the consultation that allowed the public to enter the RBMPs design process. To enable citizens to be better integrated into the water policy, a second step should be to successfully establish protocols for the dissemination of information from monitoring programs in the most relevant and the most effective ways. These protocols, completing 10AO principle indicators, could present the most accurate picture of the ecological status of the aquatic environment.

2.2. Current issues

Less aggregated indicators would allow communicating more easily about the benefits of certain types of measures. Indeed, how to explain to policymakers that despite huge investments, the status of water bodies is still considered as bad?

Issues are raised by some RBDs Authorities which think that the 10AO principle can't, alone, give satisfactory results (currently either too much optimistic or too much pessimistic) regarding the overall ecological status of aquatic environment. Indeed, indicators used to characterize the overall water bodies' status could be too global to evolve annually and even reflect efficiency of actions undertaken over a WFD cycle lifetime. There is a real need for less aggregated indicators that can be efficiently used at national and local level. Some progress is expected with new biological indicators (since their ability of pressures impacts discrimination is improved), and indicators of trends.

In almost all the Member States, most WFD surveillance networks and programmes of measures are financed and coordinated by government services or agencies (even if implemented or operated partly by subcontractors). This is of particular importance to ensure data collection in the long term, its durability and reliability, and also homogeneity and quality of data. As far as the sources of funding for monitoring programmes are mostly public (they come from government services or entities thanks to the national overall budget or specific environmental related funds) elements and information must be returned to the citizens and they must be as understandable as possible.

The current question is also to identify and/or develop interpretative tools to better communicate with policy makers and the general public on the basis of these data. In this regard, Member states and RBDs, at a local scale, have to find ways to better explain the status of water bodies using such sub-indicators. These elements are fundamental in the context of involving the public and to build understanding of the challenges ahead for water resources. It is also crucial to show the benefits of the investments realised for first cycle to the decision makers in order to show the merits and to obtain support from elected people and stakeholders for the next cycles.

2.3. Questioning

This section aims at making an inventory of indicators, tools and relevant media to communicate the results from monitoring networks.

- How do RBDs Authorities use the results communicated to the EU for their communication to citizens or stakeholders?
- What complementary indicators or sub-indicators are used within MS/RBD to assess / highlight the progress achieved during the first RBMPs?
- What are the communication tools used by RBDs Authorities to disseminate the monitoring data to:
 - o the general public
 - o the stakeholders
 - o the decision-makers

3. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND NEXT STEPS

From the first exchanges and bibliographic studies one could find some preliminary findings we propose as a basis of the future group exchanges:

We can't judge/use what we don't know so we should find ways to:

- Improve certainty in the acquisition of data in order to ensure that the results presented are consistent with reality.
- Disaggregate the results to make them more faithful to the reality on one hand, but also to see more easily the impacts of PoM on the quality of water bodies.
- Present results that can demonstrate the "return on investment" of PoM's. In fact today, , improving the ecological condition is not really visible for the general public, it is the "syndrome of red maps" ... How can we persuade people of the merits of the action taken if indicators (which must nevertheless remain simple) don't fit the improvement?

Once we have reliable and readable data, we should find the best ways to reach:

- Policy makers, because they will validate and facilitate the implementation of PoM's. An interesting lever could be the cost effectiveness showing clearly the merits of the action taken. However, the "syndrome of red maps" can also touch them as decision-makers are also influenced and must take into account the grievances of the public.
- Stakeholders, because they have significant political weight but also a very strong impact on the quality of the resource. Successfully involving and making them aware of their interest would get their "political" but also financial support. In fact, sharing the cost of PoM could be a powerful tool for intersectoral cohesion around the theme of water resources.
- The public, to help them taking ownership of the PoM and qualities of WB in general. Their involvement is necessary for the success of the PoM but also to ensure the sustainability of public funding for all policies regarding sustainable development and protection of the resource.

These points are not necessarily new, but they are in the spotlight at the upcoming launch of the second cycle of the WFD. Indeed, the different phases of reporting to the COM and the various reports delivered used to highlight problems in the data acquisition and uncertainty. These issues will become even more pressing as, though many exemptions have been obtained regarding the quality of water bodies in 2015, good status or good potential should still be achieved by 2027...

If you are interested in this topic and want to contribute to the exchanges or be informed of the results and papers released, please:

■ visit our website:

www.inbo-news.org/europe-inbo-2014

Or

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