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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

**MEETING OF THE PARTIES TO THE CONVENTION ON
THE PROTECTION AND USE OF TRANSBOUNDARY
WATERCOURSES AND INTERNATIONAL LAKES**

Working Group on Water Management

**REPORT ON THE WORKSHOP ON APPROACHES AND TOOLS FOR RIVER
BASIN MANAGEMENT: EXPERIENCE DRAWN FROM THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EC WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE*/
(Bratislava, 15-16 October 2001)**

Prepared by the chairpersons with the assistance of the secretariat

Introduction

1. The workshop took place in Bratislava on 15-16 October 2001 at the joint invitation of the Governments of Germany and Slovakia.
2. Mr. Laszlo Miklos, Minister for the Environment, Slovakia, opened the workshop and made an opening speech on behalf of the host country.

*/ This document has not been formally edited.

3. The workshop was attended by delegations from the following countries: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Republic of Moldova, Sweden, Slovakia, Slovenia, and United States.

4. Representatives of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the European Commission (EC) and the PHARE Twinning Project for Slovakia and Italy, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River, and the Slovak Society for Sustainable Development also participated in the workshop.

5. Mrs. Juliana Adamkova (Slovak Hydrometeorological Institute), Mr. Milan Matushka (Ministry of the Environment, Slovakia), Mr. Thomas Stratenwerth (Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, Germany), and Mr. Carel de Villeneuve (Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management, Netherlands, Chair man of the Meeting of the Parties to the Water Convention) chaired the workshop.

I. OBJECTIVES

6. The Parties to the Convention decided at their second meeting (The Hague, Netherlands, 23-25 March 2000) to provide guidance on basic approaches to preventing further deterioration and protecting and improving the status of aquatic ecosystems, to promote sustainable water use based on a long-term protection of available water resources as stipulated in the Convention and in the EC Directive establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy (EC Water Framework Directive).

7. Following the 2000-2003 work plan under the Convention, the workshop was intended to exchange and disseminate early experience gained in the implementation of the EC Water Framework Directive by the EU member States and countries applying for EU membership and to make use of this experience to possibly revise the 1993 UNECE Guidelines on the ecosystem approach in water management (ECE/ENVWA/31).

8. The workshop programme was drawn up by Germany's Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety and Slovakia's Ministry of the Environment, with the assistance of the secretariat (MP.WAT/WG.1/2001/4). The workshop's conclusions and recommendations (see chapter II) were adopted at the closing session.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9. The Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community actions in the field of water policy (EC Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC) is, inter alia, an instrument to transpose the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes

(Water Convention) into EC legislation. As the EC Water Framework Directive will be implemented not only by the present EU Member States but also by all countries that are applicants for EU membership, the Directive will be the ruling piece of legislation concerning river basin management in a major part of the UNECE region. Even beyond that, the Directive will be influential because it requires EU Member States to strive for basin-wide coordination of river basin management plans. As a result, present and future EU Member States will have to intensify their cooperation with non-EU countries wherever they share international river basins.

- **It is recommended that the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention makes arrangements, as appropriate, with the European Commission so that activities under both the UNECE Water Convention and the EC Water Framework Directive are brought even closer together.**

10. The EC Water Framework Directive comprises some important new concepts:

(a) The concept of “river basin district”, the area of land and sea made up of one or more neighbouring river basins together with their associated groundwaters and coastal waters as the main unit for the management of river basins;

(b) The assessment of the status of water bodies on the basis of ecological status defined by biological, hydro-morphological, and physico-chemical quality elements;

(c) The establishment of type-specific reference conditions;

(d) The combined approach using control of pollution at source through the setting of emission limit values and of environmental quality standards;

(e) The integration of economics into water policy and planning via the economic analysis of water uses and the use of pricing to encourage better water use and to recover costs.

The need to make these concepts operational for implementation triggered intensive methodological development work in the EU Member States. To ensure coherent implementation by EU Member States, Working Groups and Expert Advisory Forums were established to develop guidance documents on certain aspects of the implementation. The results will be of major interest to other countries in the UNECE region.

- **Therefore it is recommended that the Working Groups established by the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention in their respective fields of competence should serve as platforms for disseminating these results and incorporate them, as appropriate, into current and future activities supporting the implementation of the Convention.**
- **In this context, the Working Groups established under the Convention may encourage the Water Framework regime to be used by non-EU parties and thereby support the implementation of article 3 (5) of the Water Framework Directive to facilitate cooperation in basins shared with non-EU countries. Developing guidance on step-wise approaches for introducing concepts and principles of the Water**

Framework Directive into the water management of non-EU countries could be a useful task in the work programme under the Water Convention.

11. The EC Water Framework Directive underlines the necessity of transboundary coordination. The requirement to produce coordinated river basin management plans for entire river basin districts – whether large international basins or small regional ones – will compel States to evaluate whether the capacities, structures, mandates and legal basis of existing joint bodies are sufficient to meet the challenge of the Directive or whether there is a need to adapt them or to establish new ones. In larger basins, basin-wide coherence of the planning process and the resulting integrated river basin management plan should be ensured, while many of the planning tasks could be carried out at national, regional or sub-basin levels.

- **Therefore it is recommended that the Parties to the Convention should evaluate whether the existing joint bodies are capable of serving the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in transboundary river basins or if there is a need to adapt them or establish new ones.**
- **It is furthermore recommended that - under the umbrella of basin-wide coordination - innovative initiatives at sub-basin, regional or national levels, inter alia, with regard to the organisation of the planning process and the involvement of the public, are encouraged and that the outcome of such initiatives is being disseminated within the entire basin.**

12. The EC Water Framework Directive requires new approaches to the assessment of the status of water bodies. The assessment of surface waters and groundwater has to take into account chemical parameters, particularly priority substances and priority hazardous substances. Groundwater assessments also include water quantity. The assessment of surface waters has to include biological parameters comprising aquatic flora, invertebrate as well as fish fauna and supporting hydro-morphological elements. To classify the ecological status of a water body, the monitoring data have to be compared to the reference conditions for the respective water type. These reference conditions have to be established for every water body type and every water body has to be assigned to a specific water body type. In order to achieve comparability of the results accomplished by the classification systems developed in the different EU Member States, an inter-calibration of the classification systems will take place. Valuable experience has already been gained in the framework of joint bodies and regional seas' commissions. Optimum use of this experience could be made within the framework of the Common Strategy.

13. The EC Water Framework Directive obliges EU Member States to take into account the principle of recovery of the costs of water services, including environmental and resource costs. Water pricing policies must provide adequate incentives to use water resources efficiently and ensure that the different water users contribute adequately to the recovery of the costs of water services. EU Member States must carry out an economic analysis to make the calculations necessary to fulfil these requirements. The economic analysis must provide enough information to decide on the most cost-effective combination of measures related to water uses to be included in the programmes of measures for the river basin district. Moreover, the economic analysis "disproportionate costs" will be a tool for justifying derogation procedures. The implementation

of efficient water pricing policies is a major problem for countries in transition to a market economy. The same holds true for the economic evaluation and comparison of alternative combinations of measures for improving the quality status of water bodies.

- **It is therefore recommended that Parties to the Convention that are not EU Member States or candidate countries should make appropriate use of the guidance document on the economic analysis that is under development in the framework of the EU Common Strategy. A programme element aiming at testing this guidance document in countries in transition and adapting it, if required, to the specific conditions of these countries, could be considered for inclusion in the work plan for 2003 to 2006.**

14. To achieve the objectives set out in article 4 of the EC Water Framework Directive, countries have to establish programmes of measures. Moreover, they have to make the most-cost effective combination of measures transparent. It is obvious that the programme of measures will have to contain measures that belong to policies other than water management. This offers an opportunity for better integrating water management issues into the development of policies in other fields and at the same time making use of the capacities and competences available in these fields for the development and implementation of the programmes of measures. Meanwhile, it is acknowledged that the solution to the problems relating to the other policy fields may have to be found elsewhere than on the scale of the river basin.

- **It is therefore recommended that the forthcoming second international Conference on Transboundary Water Management (Poland, April 2002) should specifically address ways of better integrating water management issues into other sector policies. A programme element that aims at transferring early experience of EU Member States to countries in transition could be considered for inclusion into the 2003-2006 work plan under the Convention.**

III. FOLLOW UP

15. The Bureaux Meeting of the Parties, the Working Group on Water Management and the other Working Groups established under the Convention, will examine the outcome of the workshop at their meetings in 2002, and consider follow up activities to be undertaken under the Convention.