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Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment*

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Working paper:

**EXPERIENCE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES ON
MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS AND
GROUNDWATERS**

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

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

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**EXPERIENCE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES ON
MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT OF TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS AND
GROUNDWATERS**

Prepared by the secretariat

1. The Parties at their second meeting endorsed two sets of guidelines on monitoring and assessment: the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Rivers and the Guidelines on Monitoring and Assessment of Transboundary Groundwaters. In addition, the Meeting of the Parties requested Riparian Parties to report jointly, preferably through their joint bodies, to the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and the third meeting of the Parties about experience with the implementation of these Guidelines (ECE/MP.WAT/5, para. 37 (e)). Similarly, non-Parties were invited to inform the above bodies accordingly (ECE/MP.WAT/5, para. 37 (f)).
2. To facilitate this reporting, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment, at its third meeting in October 2002, prepared two questionnaires - one on transboundary rivers, the other on transboundary groundwaters. The secretariat sent the two questionnaires to all UNECE focal points under the Convention and evaluated their replies.
3. This document reviews the replies and provides some conclusions in order to assist the Parties in their future action. Regretfully, only a limited number of countries replied to the questionnaire; thus the report to the Meeting of the Parties is not as comprehensive as envisaged by the secretariat.
4. It should be noted that two other documents, submitted to the Parties for consideration at their third meeting, are closely related to the present evaluation: document MP.WAT/2003/10 with proposals for updating the guidelines, and document MP.WAT/2003/11 on the lessons drawn from the implementation of the pilot projects on monitoring and assessment.

Draft decision

5. The Meeting of the Parties may wish to:

- (a) Take note with appreciation of the analysis by the secretariat on the application of the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers and groundwaters (annex);
- (b) Take also note of the conclusions and recommendations to the present document¹ made by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment at its fourth meeting (11-12 September 2003);
- (c) Request the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment to take the analysis made in the present document as well in documents MP.WAT/2003/10 and 11 into account when further specifying activities in the 2004-2006 work plan;
- (d) Requests its Bureau, the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment and other bodies established under the Convention to enhance the visibility of products developed under the Convention;
- (e) Given the limited number of responses and the fact that only some countries reported jointly on the subject, request its Bureau to consider ways and means of facilitating compliance with decisions taken at meetings of the Parties related to reporting.

¹ An advance version of this document was submitted as working paper to the Working Group.

Annex

EXPERIENCE WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GUIDELINES

I. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS BY THE SECRETARIAT

A. Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers

1. All in all, there was a general satisfaction with the guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers, which was in line with the assessments made by the Parties at their various meetings.
2. There is, however, room for improvement, which has also been highlighted by the Working Group on Monitoring and Assessment (see the proposals in document MP.WAT/2003/10).
3. There is a clear difference in the way in which countries have evaluated the guidelines. Countries involved in the pilot projects, which have invested a lot of resources in the implementation of the guidelines, do have a profound knowledge of the guidelines and are in a better position to evaluate their usefulness as other countries, which do not implement pilot projects.
4. The sections of the guidelines that deal with water-quantity parameters were considered less adequately treated than the sections with water-quality parameters. There are two obvious reasons: (a) water managers have generally a better knowledge and understanding of quantity parameter rather than water-quality parameters and will often come up with proposals that guidance on quantity-related issues should be more comprehensive; (b) extreme events were not dealt with comprehensively in the guidelines.
5. However, the major problem is not related to the content of the guidelines. It is rather a lack of resources for their implementation. Following the reporting by some countries in Western Europe² and some accession countries, the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive requires much of the resources available; thus no additional attention could be given to the guidelines application. Moreover, there is a need for training and technical support programmes to foster the practical use of the guidelines, particularly in the Balkan countries as well as in countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.
6. Some countries reported that the main obstacle in the implementation of the guidelines was the still very weak cooperation between countries and the unsatisfactory development of joint monitoring programmes.
7. Finally one can wonder if the replies by 13 Parties (out of 34) is an indication of lacking information and awareness about the guidelines in the other countries and joint bodies and/or a still insufficiently developed responsibility of the national focal points to comply

² The country grouping (Western Europe; Central and Eastern Europe; 12 countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia; Balkan countries; EU accession countries; etc.) follows the approach of the European Environment Agency in its report "Europe's environment: the third assessment", submitted to the Kiev Ministerial Conference "Environment for Europe" in May 2003.

with decisions by the Meeting of the Parties. In this case and given the positive experience with the implementation in pilot projects, the Meeting of the Parties should consider ways and means to raise the guidelines' visibility.

B. Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters

8. There is definitely less experience in the implementation of joint groundwater monitoring programmes. Obviously, a meaningful assessment of the usefulness of the groundwaters guidelines was therefore impossible.

9. It is to be expected that the groundwaters pilot projects will provide better information on the guidelines' applicability. This will also be the case for other countries that are now in the process of developing joint monitoring; in this phase, the guidelines could prove to be extremely useful.

II. RESPONSES BY PARTIES AND NON-PARTIES

A. Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary rivers

10. From the 34 Parties to the Convention, 13 Parties replied to the questionnaire: Azerbaijan, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland and Norway (joint reply), Hungary, Germany (also reporting on behalf of the International Commissions for the Protection of the Rhine and Elbe), Luxembourg, Netherlands, Poland, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. In addition, a reply was received from the International Commissions for the Protection of Moselle and Saar (CIPMS).

11. The following non-Parties also replied: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and the United Nations Environment Programme's Global International Waters (UNEP/GIWA).

B. Guidelines on monitoring and assessment of transboundary groundwaters

12. Replies were submitted by the following Parties to the Convention: Azerbaijan, Estonia, Germany (also reporting on behalf of the International Commissions for the Protection of the Rhine and Elbe), Hungary, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Republic of Moldova, Romania and Slovakia. In addition, a reply was received from the International Commissions for the Protection of Moselle and Saar (CIPMS).

13. The following non-Parties also sent a reply: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and UNEP/GIWA.

C. Heterogeneity of replies

14. In the replies by countries and joint bodies, the coverage of transboundary waters was very different in scope and detail of analysis. Some replies covered the entire transboundary catchment area of a given transboundary water, whereas other replies were limited to the national part(s) of a transboundary basin.

15. Regretfully, there was hardly any reply from the 12 countries in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, although a Russian translation of the questionnaire was available.

16. Another issue is the involvement of joint bodies in the evaluation of the questionnaire: whereas some countries in Western Europe stated that they have involved the respective joint bodies or have made a joint evaluation, the majority of replies seems to be limited to a “national” evaluation.

17. Some countries submitted a detailed analysis on the various rivers basins, which they are sharing with others. Examples include Hungary (with 7 replies for the transboundary waters shared with Austria, Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and Slovenia, respectively) and the Czech Republic (with 4 replies for transboundary rivers shared with Austria, Slovakia, Germany and Poland, respectively). Other countries, such as Romania, the Republic of Moldova and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, submitted “summary” replies covering all their transboundary waters without a specification whether these waters belong to different basins or are shared with different countries.

III. QUESTIONNAIRE ON TRANSBOUNDARY RIVERS

A. Decision to use the guidelines

18. The questionnaire asked to state whether an official decision to use the guidelines had been taken by the joint bodies.

19. Apart from the obvious decision to apply the guidelines in the pilot projects on monitoring and assessing transboundary rivers, a specific decision on this issue was also taken by one country (Republic of Moldova) and three joint bodies: the Hungarian-Austrian Permanent Water Committee for future development of monitoring programmes, the Finnish – Norwegian Transboundary Water Commission and the Joint Finnish – Russian Commission on the Utilization of Frontier Waters.

B. Extent to which the guidelines have been used

20. It was asked to assess to which extent the guidelines had been used and to rate it from “1” (not at all) to “5” (extensively in all aspects).

21. In two cases, it was stated that the guidelines were used “extensively in all aspects” and it was in both cases for the pilot projects on the Kura River (in Azerbaijan’s reply) and the Morava River (Slovakia’s reply).

22. Bosnia and Herzegovina stated that the guidelines had “not been used at all” as the agreement on the Sava River basin was only signed in December 2002 and a joint monitoring system has not yet been established.

23. In two cases (Luxembourg and the CIPMS), there was no reply to this question.

24. The average rating of the use of the guidelines was “3” which was also the most common rating (in 13 cases).

C. Reasons for not using the guidelines

25. The questionnaire listed a series of possible reasons for not using the guidelines as follows:

- “Other guidelines were used” was mentioned 18 times;
- “Monitoring and assessment procedures were already adequate” was mentioned 12 times;
- “Resources and efforts have been concentrated on the Water Framework Directive” was mentioned 10 times;
- “There were no funds or staff resources to implement the Guidelines” was mentioned 6 times;
- “The Guidelines were not available in the national language” and “The Guidelines were too strategic and did not give enough technical guidance” were mentioned 5 times;
- “The Guidelines were used but only in pilot projects” was mentioned 4 times;
- “No agreement could be reached between Riparian States to establish monitoring and assessment systems” was mentioned 3 times.

26. The most common reason given by countries for not using the guidelines was the still insufficient degree of development of transboundary cooperation, in particular monitoring and assessment activities.

D. Guidelines’ usefulness

27. The next part of the questionnaire aimed at assessing the usefulness of the different sections of the rivers guidelines. It was asked to evaluate their effectiveness in each stage of the monitoring cycle, rating it from “1” (not at all) to “5” (very useful).

28. Seven questionnaires did not present any answer to these questions as the responding persons considered that the experience with the guidelines was too limited to make such an assessment. In the other cases, the following average ratings were given to the usefulness of the guidelines sections:

- “Identification of water management issues”: 3.7 (most common rating 4);
- “Identification of information needs”: 3.7 (most common rating 4);
- “Design of strategies for monitoring and assessment”: 3.6 (most common ratings 3);
- “Development of monitoring programmes”: 3.6 (most common rating 4);
- “Data management”: 3.2 (most common rating 4);
- “Quality management”: 3.2 (most common rating 4);

- “Organization of joint or coordinated action and institutional arrangements”: 3.1 (most common rating 3).

29. In general, it can be noted that all sections were considered sufficiently useful, as all average ratings are not lower than 3. The weaker section, according to the questionnaire, is the part on the organization of joint or coordinated action and institutional arrangements, followed by data and quality management. As concerns the sections on joint or coordinated action and institutional arrangements, this clearly calls for better guidance by the Meeting of the Parties rather than the Working Group. As concerns data and quality management, this clearly requires better guidance by the Working Group.

E. Overall usefulness in enhancing information quality according to information needs

30. The questionnaire requested to assess the degree of enhancing the information quality, rating it from “1” (not at all) to “5” (yes, greatly).

31. Eight questionnaires did not present any answer to this question. The average rating for this question was 3.1. One can argue that the overall usefulness was considered satisfactory.

F. Quality and quantity parameters

32. It was asked to assess the emphasis given to water-quality and water-quantity aspects, rating it from “1” (not at all) to “5” (yes, adequately).

33. Six questionnaires did not present any answers on these questions. The average rating for quality parameters was 4.4. The average rating for quantity parameters was 4.

G. Translations

34. Hungary and Poland made translations in their national languages of the second edition of the river guidelines. The Czech Republic and Slovakia had a national version of the first edition.

35. Georgia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova stated that a reason for not using the guidelines was their unavailability in their national languages and manifested their intention to translate them at a later stage.

36. Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Czech Republic, for the second edition, stated that they have planned to translate the guidelines in their national languages.

H. Capacity building

37. Apart from the countries in which the river pilots are being implemented, no other country reported on training and capacity building activities to promote the implementation of the guidelines.

IV. QUESTIONNAIRE ON TRANSBOUNDARY GROUNDWATERS

A. Decision to use the guidelines

38. Apart from the pilot project on the Aggtelek - Slovak Karst, shared by Slovakia and Hungary, a specific decision to use the groundwater guidelines was only by one country (Republic of Moldova) and one joint body: the Austrian-Hungarian Permanent Water Committee for the future development of the monitoring programmes.

B. Extent to which the guidelines have been used

39. Compared to transboundary river monitoring, fewer countries reported on groundwater monitoring activities. Moreover, the replies were less complete, which was obviously due to the rather unsatisfactory development of monitoring of (transboundary) groundwaters.

40. Following the replies, Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia do not monitor their groundwaters. Groundwaters shared by Hungary and Ukraine are not covered by an agreement between the two countries. Work on groundwaters is still to be developed under the International Commissions for the Protection of Moselle and Saar. Cooperation on transboundary groundwaters is planned or is at its very initial stage: (a) between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovenia on the Sava River; (b) between Hungary and Croatia; (c) between Hungary and Romania; (d) between Hungary and Slovenia; (e) between the Russian Federation and Estonia; and (f) in the Meuse catchment area. Finally, Hungary reported on the need to improve overall cooperation with Serbia and Montenegro, including transboundary groundwater monitoring.

41. Only in the two countries sharing the catchment area of the Aggtelek - Slovak Karst (Hungary and Slovakia) reported that they are using the guidelines “extensively in all aspects”. The other nine replies stated that the guidelines have “not been used at all”.

C. Reasons for not using the guidelines

42. In addition to the small degree of cooperation on groundwaters already mentioned, the possible reasons for not using the guidelines were as follows:

- “The Guidelines were not available in the national language” was mentioned 6 times;
- “There were no funds or staff resources to implement the Guidelines” was mentioned 5 times;
- “Other guidelines were used” was mentioned 4 times;
- “Resources and efforts have been concentrated on the Water Framework Directive” was mentioned 4 times;
- “No agreement could be reached between Riparian States to establish monitoring and assessment systems” and “Monitoring and assessment of groundwater is not a responsibility of the joint body” were mentioned 3 times.

- “The Guidelines were too strategic and did not give enough technical guidance” was mentioned twice;
- “Monitoring and assessment procedures were already adequate” was mentioned in one case.

D. Guidelines’ usefulness

43. This part of the questionnaire was completed only in six cases, as most of the responding persons considered that the experience with the guidelines was too limited to make such an assessment.
44. Furthermore, Georgia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, which stated that they did not use the guidelines at all, rated all questions in this part with “5” and “1”, respectively. Obviously, such a rating was not the result of an in-depth analysis of the guidelines and was therefore excluded from the secretariat’s assessment.
45. The remaining four replies do not allow drawing an in-depth conclusion. It can be said that the different sections of the guidelines have always been rated “3” or higher, except the parts on “Design of strategies for monitoring and assessment”, “Data management” and “Quality management” which have been rated “2” in one case.

E. Overall usefulness in enhancing information quality according to information needs

46. The overall usefulness was also rated “3” or higher.

F. Quality and quantity parameters

47. The emphasis given to quality and quantity aspects was also rated “3” or higher as it was the case with the assessment for quality and quantity parameters.

G. Translations

48. Hungary and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia made translations of the groundwaters guidelines in their national languages.
49. Georgia, Romania and the Republic of Moldova, which stated that the reason for not using the guidelines was their unavailability in the national languages, manifested their intention to translate them. Bosnia and Herzegovina also informed the secretariat about the envisaged translation.

H. Capacity building

50. Only Romania reported on training and capacity building activities to promote the implementation of the guidelines.