

Framework for Community action in the field of water policy. Water Framework Directive

1997/0067(COD) - 01/04/2009 - Follow-up document

The Commission presents a report in accordance with article 18.3 of the Water Framework Directive 2000 /60/EC on programmes for monitoring of water status.

The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), adopted in 2000, laid the foundation for a modern, holistic and ambitious water policy for the European Union and defined a clear implementation calendar to achieve its objectives, with intermediate deadlines for the achievement of specific tasks, among them:

- December 2003: transposition of the WFD into national law, identification of river basin districts and set up of administrative arrangements;
- December 2004: pressure and impact analysis of river basin districts, and economic analysis of water uses;
- December 2006: establishment of the monitoring programmes for the assessment of water status;
- December 2008: publication of the draft river basin management plans for consultation;
- December 2009: adoption of the river basin management plans;
- December 2012: programme of measures operational at the latest;
- December 2015: achievement of good status for surface and groundwater and first update of the river basin management plan.

The first Commission communication gave, in March 2007, an overview of the aims of the Directive and summarised the results of the implementation of the first two steps identified above (see [COD/1997/0067](#) in the follow up documents).

This Report and the accompanying Commission Staff Working Document responds to WFD Article 18(3) which requires the Commission to publish a report on the progress of implementation of the WFD related to Article 8 on monitoring of water status. This report is based on the information submitted by Member States in accordance with WFD article 15(2), due on 22 March 2007.

1) Reporting: all Member States have reported on the establishment of monitoring programmes in accordance with Article 8 and Annex V WFD, with the exception of Greece which has not reported and Malta, which has not reported on surface water monitoring programmes. In addition, gaps were detected in individual river basin districts or individual water categories.

For the first time ever, Member States have reported electronically through WISE, the *Water Information System for Europe*. The electronic submission of reports through WISE has proven to be successful with a total of 24 Member States having reported through this channel to date. WISE provides for a more effective and streamlined reporting and is already bringing benefits in terms of avoiding double reporting of monitoring stations.

However, there are still some improvements needed to ensure that the reports submitted are clear and comprehensive. Clear and comprehensive reporting is a pre-requisite to enable the Commission to carry out a proper analysis of the implementation. Good practice examples of clear reporting include the reports of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary and the Netherlands.

2) Monitoring: in general terms, there is a good monitoring effort across the European Union.

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more than 107 000 monitoring stations were reported for monitoring of surface water and groundwater under the Water Framework Directive. On surface waters, by far the largest number of monitoring stations is located on rivers (75%), followed by lakes (13%), coastal waters (10%) and transitional waters (2%);

- in general, it appears that the provisions of Annex V to the WFD and the existing guidance documents on monitoring of surface water and groundwater have been applied, although there is room for improvement in some Member States to improve the understanding and application of the basic concepts of surveillance, operational and investigative monitoring;
- the reports from Austria, Czech Republic and Hungary can be cited as examples of good practice, showing a clear approach to the development of WFD monitoring programmes. In addition, the reports from Ireland and the United Kingdom show a significant monitoring effort to ensure confidence in the monitoring results. Finally, the efforts of the countries joining the EU in 2007 should also be acknowledged. Whilst the development of methods to assess ecological status is far from being completed in Bulgaria and Romania, the monitoring programmes have been established in accordance with the concepts of the WFD and, particularly in Romania, provide for comprehensive monitoring;
- one of the key elements of the WFD is that it sets a framework to take into account all pressures and impacts in the aquatic environment and integrates the requirements of other key existing EU water legislation as minimum basic measures. The WFD requires specific monitoring of protected areas, in particular in water bodies used for the abstraction of drinking water and in water dependent habitat and species protection areas. However, in many cases these specific requirements have not been clearly incorporated into the WFD monitoring programmes. The programmes adopted in Ireland can be cited as a positive example of an approach to meet these requirements through specific monitoring sub-nets. The integration of monitoring requirements from other Directives into the monitoring programmes under the WFD should bring benefits for planning and allocating resources for monitoring more efficiently;
- despite international coordination mechanisms being in place in many international river basin districts, only a few Member States such as Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, Romania and United Kingdom have reported using them in establishing their monitoring programmes. In order to ensure a targeted and sound planning of the programme of measures in international river basin districts, Member States need to coordinate monitoring programmes within the river basin district in order to provide an integrated assessment of the existing pressures and impacts;
- the main aim of monitoring is to assess the status of water with the assessment of ecological status of surface waters being of central importance. As has already been seen in the intercalibration exercise, there remain quite a number of gaps in the development of biological assessment methods for determining ecological status. The analysis of the information provided on monitoring programmes shows that there are still many river basin districts where the necessary assessment methods for biological quality elements are not yet in place. This is particularly true in the countries that joined the EU in 2004 and 2007;
- little information was delivered on the levels of confidence and precision of the overall monitoring programmes and in particular of the assessment methods for ecological status. It is therefore difficult to assess whether the monitoring programmes will deliver a sufficient level of confidence and precision for the purpose of providing a coherent and comprehensive overview of the status of water bodies across the river basin districts and to inform the decision making in relation to the programme of measures.

The river basin management plans due at the end of 2009 will provide the whole picture of the river basin districts in terms of pressures, impacts, status assessment and measures and this will enable the Commission to assess comprehensively the results delivered by the monitoring programmes.