

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

1997/0067(COD) - 14/11/2012 - Follow-up document

This Commission report on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) (2000/60/EC) concerns an evaluation by the Commission of **river basin management plans** (RBMPs) submitted by the Member States. The report's conclusions were used to prepare the policy proposals presented in the Commission's communication on the "Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources" and will be examined in the context of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS).

The main points of the report as are follows:

State of play: the report shows that 23 Member States have adopted and reported all their Plans. 4 Member States (BE, EL, ES and PT) have either not adopted Plans or only adopted and reported some plans. In total, the Commission has received 124 RBMPs (out of an expected 174). 75% of these concern transboundary river basins.

The report underlines that there are good examples of implementation of all aspects of the WFD. Therefore, Member States lagging behind in the approval and implementation of their RBMPs have the chance of learning from others with a view to remedy their delays.

Objective of achieving good status for all water bodies by 2015: the assessment of the RBMPs indicates that progress towards the objective is expected, but **good status will not be reached in 2015** for a significant proportion of water bodies. The information provided in the RBMPs on chemical status for surface waters is not sufficiently clear to establish a baseline for 2009.

The chemical quality of water bodies has significantly improved in the last 30 years, but the situation as regards these priority substances introduced by the WFD is **below the objectives**. All too often, in the RBMPs, exemptions are used to justify existing water uses and management practices showing no plan to achieve WFD objectives.

Monitoring and assessment: despite considerable progress, some countries show **important gaps** in the development and application of assessment methods. A clear gap in monitoring emerges from the information reported to the Commission. This shows that around 15% of surface water bodies in the EU are in unknown ecological status and 40% in unknown chemical status.

Chemical monitoring is insufficient in many Member States, where not all priority substances are monitored or the number of water bodies where monitoring takes place is limited.

Legal framework and governance: although progress has been significant, this has not taken place in most Member States, where there is a continuation of the status quo. The WFD environmental objectives appear to have been included as additional goals but **not really integrated into policy decisions**.

Appropriate **coordination** in decision making across sectors is essential. Cross-border cooperation and coordination of implementation processes is also essential to implement the WFD principle of management at the river basin scale, in particular considering that transboundary river basins cover most of the EU. Moreover, **transparency** on how the results of the consultation processes are considered is important, and there are some good examples in this respect.

Integration of quantitative and qualitative aspects in water management: shortcomings have been identified in the RBMPs in relation to the quality and availability of datasets and lack of coherent measures. Information on the impacts of climate change is included in a number of RBMPs, but in most cases it does not influence the selection of measures and it is planned to be addressed more thoroughly in the next RBMP planning cycle.

Promoting rational use through adequate water pricing: the assessment of the RBMPs shows the **poor quality of the assessment of costs and benefits**. A strong improvement in this area and the definition of a shared methodology for the calculation of costs (including environmental and resource costs) and benefits (including ecosystem services) is necessary. Otherwise, it will be possible neither to ensure the implementation of effective pricing policies nor to avoid disproportionate and inadequate measures.

Funding of measures: decisions on funding have to match the priorities set in the RBMPs. Most of the RBMPs **do not contain precise information on how much it will cost** to implement the measures and how they are going to be financed. Financing mechanisms and availability of funds are to be identified when selecting the measures. Otherwise, the feasibility of implementation is uncertain.

In conclusion, the assessment undertaken by the Commission shows that **a more determined effort is needed to ensure achievement of WFD objectives in 2015, 2021 and 2027 cycles**.

Implementation of RBMPs should ensure that water management is based on a better understanding of the main risks and pressures in a river basin founded on proper monitoring. This will result in cost effective interventions to ensure the long-term sustainable supply of water for people, business and nature.

The Commission:

- will continue to seek and promote a **fruitful informal cooperation with Member States and stakeholders** in the context of the CIS;
- will also **follow-up bilaterally with the Member States** on the implementation of the recommendations that it is putting forward in this implementation report and in accompanying documents, while keeping on enforcing WFD obligations as necessary.