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Administração da
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« EUROPE-INBO 2011 »
9th EUROPEAN CONFERENCE
ON THE WATER FRAMEWORK DIRECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION

9th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
NETWORK OF BASIN ORGANIZATIONS - MENBO

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The ninth conference of the "EUROPE-INBO" group was held in Oporto, Portugal, from 27 to 30 September 2011, at the invitation of the ARH Norte (Administração da Região Hidrográfica do Norte/ River Basin Administration of Northern Portugal).

The "EUROPE-INBO 2011" conference gathered 254 participants, representatives of national administrations and basin organizations as well as NGOs and companies from 46 Countries (list of countries in Annex).

As the conference was taking place six months before the 6th World Water Forum to be held in Marseilles in March 2012, special attention was paid to solutions proposed under the European Regional Preparatory Process.

The "EUROPE-INBO 2011" meeting was jointly organized with the 9th General Assembly of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO) that promotes basin management in the riparian Countries of the Mediterranean.

The "EUROPE-INBO" group of European basin organizations for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) was created in Valencia, Spain, in 2003, and gathers European member organizations and observers of the International Network of Basin Organizations (INBO), the European Union and of candidate and neighbor countries concerned.

Within INBO, the Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organizations (CEENBO), the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations (MENBO), and the Network of Basin Organizations of Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA - NBO), facilitate exchanges and discussions on basin management in an enlarged European context.

The "EUROPE-INBO" group holds annual plenary assemblies: Valencia (Spain) in 2003, Krakow (Poland) in 2004, Namur (Belgium) in 2005, Megève (France) in 2006, Rome (Italy) in 2007, Sibiu (Romania) in 2008, Stockholm (Sweden) in 2009 and Megève (France) in 2010.

The "EUROPE-INBO" group allows Basin Organizations and District Authorities to meet regularly, in an informal way, to exchange their practical experience, to identify the operational problems and to make proposals for effective implementation of the WFD.

The work of the "EUROPE-INBO" group aims at enriching the WFD Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) especially with analyses coming directly from field practitioners.

The "EUROPE-INBO" group thus disseminates and promotes the WFD concepts and tools and an experience feedback towards interested countries not members of the European Union, especially neighboring countries which are riparian of transboundary rivers shared with EU Member States.

The 9th "EUROPE-INBO 2011" international conference in Oporto was organized around five successive round tables addressing the following issues:

- Water and Energy: the dilemmas, costs and benefits.
- Application of the WFD in countries non-members of the European Union.
- Water Governance in Transboundary River Basin scenarios: Strategic cooperation and twinning among Water Authorities.
- Adapt to long term challenges linked to climate change and prevent extreme phenomena.
- Develop new knowledge and know-how on river hydro-morphology, restoration and protection of water ecosystems.

In addition, the preparation of the 6th World Water Forum 2012 in Marseilles - France has been the subject of a detailed presentation and constructive proposals, as well as side specialized workshops.

75 papers were presented during the five round tables.

Discussions led to recommendations that the participants wish to include in the "solutions" presented at World Water Forum in Marseilles, and beyond for the continued improvement of water resources management in Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.

Cooperation among the riparian countries to better manage transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers in Europe and the Mediterranean must be improved:

Collaboration between riparian countries on the management of water and ecosystems and the harmonization of their policies can reduce the conflicts and share multiple and benefits.

Transboundary river and aquifer basins should be managed in an integrated manner, based on legal frameworks common to all the riparian countries, a shared understanding of the challenges, based on the exchange of data and analyses, made transparent and accessible and on the involvement of all the different stakeholders to define a "shared vision" and a common strategy for the future to share the benefits.

Articulating international, regional and national legal frameworks is essential for reliable and stable cooperation.

In many transboundary basins, it is necessary to establish, revise / modernize and strengthen the institutional and legal framework to facilitate consultation, cooperation and coordination among stakeholders on shared water resources.

In many transboundary basins, the national legislation of the riparian countries has no specific provisions or has very incomplete ones on cooperation with the other neighboring countries concerned.

International agreements where they exist foster cooperation between countries and provide a common framework to conduct negotiations and implement joint projects.

Over the past 20 years, since 1992, the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and international Lakes, called "Water Convention" (or Helsinki Convention) and the "Protocol on Water and Health" have been successfully applied in the pan-European region, in the countries of UNECE which have ratified them.

The UN Convention on International Watercourses (1997) aims to establish a framework for cooperation between interested countries. It has not yet been ratified by enough countries to enter officially into force. Several initiatives are underway to encourage more countries to ratify it so that it can quickly enter into force.

The UN resolution on transboundary aquifers finally allows a better consideration of these strategic resources for the future.

The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) introduces specific provisions, ambitious and binding for the international River Basin Districts in the EU. Its provisions are interesting several countries outside the European Union.

The findings of the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters (UNECE, 2011) presented at the 2nd Ministerial Conference of Astana *Environment for Europe* in September 2011 shows that progresses in transboundary cooperation on water in the region vary: several agreements were recently signed such as for the Prut, tributary of the Danube, between Romania and Moldova, or for the Prespa Lake in South-East Europe or in Caucasus and Central Asia. Basin commissions have been established for several large rivers (Danube, Rhine, Elbe, Oder, Scheldt, Meuse and Sava, etc.). Some agreements have been revised such as the Albufeira Convention between Spain and Portugal.

However, many basins, particularly in Southeast and Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and Central Asia, still lack effective frameworks for cooperation.

The joint bodies responsible for transboundary cooperation on water are still few, often with a limited mandate and limited operational capacity.

Transboundary agreements must be concrete and include institutional arrangements for the management and protection of water resources and ecosystems.

It is important that transboundary aquifers are also included in this cooperation.

Many river and lake basins are shared by UNECE member countries and countries outside UNECE (e.g. Amu Darya, shared between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in the UNECE region and Afghanistan outside UNECE). It is necessary to strengthen regional in this field.

It is therefore advisable that all UNECE countries ratify the “Water Convention” and to accelerate the entry into force of the amendment opening the Convention to countries outside the UNECE region. All UNECE countries are invited to ratify the amendment.”

It is advisable to provide increased support to countries for the signing and implementation of new agreements on transboundary basins in Greater UNECE region, as well as for the creation of new transboundary river basin organizations or for strengthening existing ones.

We must disseminate a new culture of water resources management in each country.

The 9th International EUROPE-INBO Conference 2011 in Oporto considers that the strengthening of transboundary cooperation between States that share transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers, is only conceivable if it is based on the strengthening of river district authorities in each national part of the shared basins and on the development of a culture for cooperation with their counterparts in the other countries concerned.

The process started in the entire European Union with the enactment of the European Water Framework Directive (WFD), to achieve good ecological status of water bodies in the European Union in 2015, is a path that other regions can explore and follow, as is the case in neighboring countries, especially those sharing the same transboundary basin with EU Member Countries.

However, the reporting obligations to the European Commission, carried out independently by each Member State for its national part of a transboundary basin, and differences in implementation schedules in the countries may paradoxically limit the role of international commissions to the production of umbrella reports strictly reduced to transboundary activities, thus masking an overview of the actions undertaken in the whole basin and do not really promote international integration.

It is therefore necessary to strengthen and widen the mandate of international commissions and their means for carrying out their tasks of exchange and coordination at the level of the whole transboundary basin.

It is also necessary to improve the consistency of targets, measures and deadlines for implementation between the riparian States.

The Basin Management Plans should be the key instruments for this integration of transboundary efforts. A change seems advisable for the next cycle from 2015 to 2021.

The basin management approach is the best way to manage water resources.

Common cause between upstream and downstream basins should be strengthened, particularly in view of the adaptation to climate change.

It is essential to improve coordination between the WFD and the other European Directives on the complementary aspects of water resources management, such as the Directive on Urban Waste Water (1991), the "Nitrates" Directive (1991), the "Drinking Water Directive (1998), the "Groundwater" Directive (2006), the "Bathing Water" Directive (2006), the "Floods" Directive (2007), the Framework Directive on Marine Strategy (2008), the Directive on Environmental Quality Standards (2008), and the REACH Guidelines.

These complex measures are often implemented by services or even different Ministry departments depending on the Member States, the coordination of which is a problem

The Commission is preparing a third assessment report in 2012, including a review of the river basin management plans with recommendations for improvement.

It is regrettable that several Member States have taken a significant delay in the timetable for the development of River Basin Management Plans, which are not yet published for some of them.

But, above all, water management is linked to many sectoral policies of the European Union: cross-sectoral integration is the only way for sustainable water resources management in the future.

It is clear that the "Good Status" of many water bodies, especially groundwater, will not be achieved in 2015 and sometimes beyond, without a significant strengthening of agri-environmental measures in the reform process of the Common Agricultural Policy.

The objectives to be achieved by different European policies are likely to be contradictory to the WFD without quick clarification, as is the case in the development of hydropower with the "Renewable Energy" Directive or of waterways transport in projects for a Trans-European Transport Network

It is also necessary to introduce new practices to prevent droughts and water shortages affecting a large part of the territory and of the European population, and especially to provide "sustainability" to irrigated agriculture, essential for increasing food production, for securing farms' economy and production quality

It will be necessary to reduce water consumption and enhance the effectiveness of all uses.

Similarly we must now quickly quantify the economic value of the services provided by aquatic ecosystems, to better justify their protection and restoration.

Water management should be integrated into all EU sectoral policies.

Public involvement will be crucial to achieve the objectives of the WFD and of the other water directives. Many Europeans are still not aware of the issues facing the future of water. Communication towards decision-makers and the general public should be considerably strengthened to create a true awareness.

Adapting to the short, medium and long term challenges that climate change imposes to water resources and the prevention of extreme phenomena are strategic in Europe and the Mediterranean to face the future.

The balance between water demand and resources availability has reached a critical level in many European and Mediterranean areas, creating structural situations of scarcity.

More and more regions are affected by changes in hydrological cycles and in rainfalls, especially in Southern Europe and in the mountains.

Climate change will exacerbate these impacts in the future, with more severe droughts or floods throughout Europe and neighboring countries.

It is especially urgent to develop a better "Science and Policy Interface" (SPI) to precisely anticipate changes and provide field operators with new tools or innovations to be introduced in the next 2015 - 2021 and 2021 - 2027 cycles of the Basin Management Plans and Programs of Measures necessary for their achievement.

It is particularly essential for adaptation to climate change to be integrated in future Management Plans for international basins.

As part of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, UNECE published in 2009, "a guide on water and adaptation to climate change," which should be largely disseminated. UNECE is implementing a program of pilot projects on adaptation to climate change in transboundary basins, and a platform for exchanging experience. All interested Parties are invited to join the platform.

In September 2010, the conference on "Water and Mountains" in Megève - France detailed the consequences of climate change on large European rivers that have their basin headwaters in mountains and proposes to increase common cause between upstream and downstream.

For EU countries, the "project to save water in Europe" will be the political response to these challenges. It will aim to ensure in 2020 good quality water in sufficient quantity for all legitimate uses.

To achieve this objective, the project should be based on ambitious political decisions especially made after review of water scarcity and drought in the EU and the precise assessment of water resource vulnerability to climate change.

Thought should focus on three priority topics, based on practical examples:

- The risk of flooding and marine flooding (taking the examples of the Maas and Scheldt districts);
- Water scarcity and drought risk (especially with a demand management policy);
- Innovative and ambitious measures for adaptation to climate change and its consequences on hydrological cycles.

The EUROPE-INBO group supports the approach adopted by the European Commission.

It recommends an analysis which will allow showing if the solutions implemented in the EU may be applied in other neighboring EECCA and Mediterranean regions.

Measures for adaptation to climate change, such as "green infrastructures" should be urgently studied:

- Development of methods for assessing the specific impacts of climate change on water resources in sub-basins and their vulnerability, the management of uncertainties, the identification of risk areas,
- Promotion of innovative mechanisms for adaptation - "Clearing-house's water prototype", of new technologies and practices,
- Development of transboundary adaptation plans, reduction of erosion, interface between water resources management and land use planning, policies on the use of "green infrastructures",
- Introduction of adaptation to the effects on water resources in the priorities of negotiations on climate change.

Better coordination of policies on water and sustainable energy is needed in the EU and the Mediterranean

It is essential to balance the WFD requirements with those of the Directive on Renewable Energy

The coordinated implementation of the WFD and of the "Renewable Energy" Directive 2009/28/EC, which foresees an increase in electricity production from renewable sources in all the European Union up to 20% of total production, is a true challenge

In 2005, the risk assessment showed that the hydro-morphological pressures and impacts are one of the most important risks to take into account for achieving the objectives of the WFD.

The risk analysis conducted as part of the WFD has shown that hydropower is a major source of alteration of the hydro-morphology of water bodies and the biggest obstacle, with also many old reaches, now abandoned, and of the continuity of flows necessary for the survival of aquatic fauna and the reproductive cycle of migratory fish. Water storage for hydropower was particularly identified as the third root cause of the "Heavily Modified Water Body" status, after the protection against flooding and regulation of rivers.

Uncontrolled development of hydro-power infrastructure would be most likely detrimental to the objectives of the WFD, if it was done in a non-integrated manner and without taking into account the environmental requirements of this directive.

On the other hand, hydropower is inexpensive, produces no greenhouse gas emissions, and is renewable; it allows adaptation to peak consumption and storage of the energy produced at low consumption. It will also be impacted by changes in the regime of rivers caused by climate change, including the European rivers with snow and glacier regime which have their headwaters in the mountains.

Therefore, it is necessary to find a balance that allows both an effective implementation of the Water Framework Directive and compliance with the objectives in terms of renewable energy that Europe has given itself.

In each basin, it is necessary to provide frameworks allowing an integrated approach to both prevent and adapt to the impacts of climate change, to promote the protection and restoration of aquatic environments, to develop hydropower as a source of electricity both renewable and non-CO₂-emitting, and to preserve the "good status" of rivers and restore the continuity of longitudinal flows.

The development and operation of hydropower units must take into account the environmental objectives of the WFD, in particular the requirements for the construction of new units. The improved performance of existing hydropower plants, which have real economic value, and their modernization are certainly a priority.

Strategic plans for the development of hydropower units must be drafted and accompanied by measures to minimize impacts on the aquatic environment and improve the built areas versus aquatic life, through clear environmental standards.

In addition, discussions on water and energy should also be linked to the debate on climate change adaptation, including other issues such as energy efficiency, the movement of migratory fish or the management of sediments or of the pollutants accumulated in the reservoirs.

It would be advisable to clearly identify the sections of rivers that must be protected because of their ecological interest and those in which hydropower infrastructure could be considered and under what conditions, for both micropower plants and for large projects.

Framework agreements, such as the one signed in France between the Ministries in charge of the environment, energy, hydropower producers and associations for the protection of nature, laying down the objectives, the requirements and means for follow-up and monitoring, could be usefully generalized.

A review of old hydropower concessions to accommodate the new goals and perspectives of climate change should be quickly considered. In some countries where these reviews are not planned for, legislative changes should be made. Old infrastructure should be arranged to meet the new requirements. The infrastructures that are no more economic should be "erased".

New works should meet any strict requirement, particularly in terms of maintaining an ecological reserved flow for migrating fish species and sediment management.

The new hydropower concessions and the renewal of expiring old ones should be considered in each basin to cover a "complete chain of work" promoting their integrated management and not for each infrastructure.

It is necessary to improve the European and Mediterranean drinking water supply and sanitation services.

Water services have a cost. They require substantial funding, both in investment and operation for sustainable management. Financing water services must be thoroughly discussed. Civil society must be informed and participate in decision-making including the question of who should pay. The relationship between price, access and use must be clear.

The WFD aims to improve transparency of water services financing.

Analysis supporting tools, strategic financial planning and decision-making must be developed and disseminated.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recent findings underlined the importance of strategic financial planning to find the right equitable and sustainable mix of the three ultimate financial sources of funding for the sector: taxes, tariffs and transfers – the "3Ts".

Unlike loans or issuing bonds which are primarily the means to meet cash requirements, the "3T" can be considered as viable options for sustainable financing of water services. In fact they generate revenue flows to meet regular financial requirements in the medium and long term.

In the EU, the application of this concept must become a priority, especially since it would contribute significantly to meeting the requirements of the Water Framework Directive, in terms of transparency of water services financing for which it seems that there is significant delay.

Discussions on these issues among relevant institutions (European Investment Bank, DG Environment, OECD, etc.) and economic studies on the financing of the water sector in Europe and the Mediterranean should be encouraged and supported.

The Working Group of the European Regional Preparatory Process for the 6th World Water Forum on the improvement of drinking water supply and sanitation services in Europe, led by EUREAU, proposes the publication of a methodological guide on prices, taxes and transfers to help decision making by promoting and explaining the distinctions between the "3T" and other forms of financing such as loans, bond issues, etc...

This Working Group, which held a workshop in Oporto as a side event of the "EUROPE-INBO 2011" conference, wishes to develop a methodology adapted to the right information for decision makers and users. The OECD and EIB will provide their support.

The workshop discussed the objectives of the guide, methods of comparing cash flows in different countries, current studies on the comparative price of water services.

As regards WFD implementation, and more specifically the cost recovery principle, more visibility and "comparability" between services of different countries are needed.

Data collected at the European level can provide elements for a macroeconomic analysis of costs and benefits in the various laws of the Member States.

The workshop participants expressed views on the scale of which data should or could be pragmatically gathered: the 3T approach can advantageously be applied at local, regional or country level. It is also necessary to present elements adapted to a suitable level for decision makers.

The workshop also helped clarify some definitions of "3T", regarding, for example, financial flows to water agencies or transfers beyond the borders of States.

The workshop allowed defining more precisely the contents of the handbook and an action plan.

Other Mediterranean countries are invited to consider these concepts.

Developing new knowledge and new know-how in the field of river hydro-morphology, restoration and protection of aquatic ecosystems is needed.

The Water Framework Directive has changed the game for the rehabilitation and protection of aquatic ecosystems.

Most projects were previously carried out on a small scale, on local water bodies, and did not generate complex problems to solve.

Now, the new policy of the European Union introduced a more holistic, integrated and large scale process.

The motivations that guided these changes are indeed the need to better manage flood risks, with the use of flood plains, the improvement of river water quality and its morphological status, and the development of agri-environmental programs to minimize the impact of some intensive agricultural practices.

Of course, the larger the scale of a project is, more it will be complex in terms of technology, of environmental, social, economic and financial impact.

One of the most obvious barriers in these types of projects is land ownership or the right to intervene in the field, or to change its use.

To allow such projects to succeed, the mechanisms of regional planning on a large-scale or initiatives of the "land bank" type should be developed, as it is the case in the Netherlands or Denmark, where holistic solutions include multiple benefits such as flood control, and protection of nature.

But these projects are often limited by lack of knowledge, practical examples and information or awareness of the planners and managers. There is a strong need for knowledge and know-how in river hydro-morphology, restoration and protection of aquatic ecosystems, to allow developing such projects. Much can be learned from countries that have experience in this field.

It is therefore vital to develop and share information on best practices in river hydro-morphology and restoration of rivers and aquatic ecosystems.

These would include:

- Promotion of integrated regional planning with restoration and protection of rivers and aquatic ecosystems,

- A consensus on best practices for the restoration and protection of rivers and aquatic ecosystems to achieve the European objectives; the dissemination of good examples,
- Improvement of relationships between tourist development and quality of aquatic ecosystems

It is necessary to promote technological innovation, a science-policy interface and dialogue between researchers and water managers

The objectives of the WFD raise multi-disciplinary questions that cannot be solved without innovative and strengthened partnership between scientists, policy-makers and field practitioners.

These complex questions, to which quick answers must be given, require new modes of relations between scientists, policy-makers and field practitioners.

In particular, a continuous transfer of knowledge must be ensured and, conversely, the stakeholders should be actively involved in the formulation of research issues.

To facilitate technology transfer, it is necessary to have better communication between stakeholders who use different languages and glossaries.

Facilitating technology transfer is a challenge as the water sector is large, fragmented and diverse. It involves a large number of stakeholders at different levels.

This variety of stakeholders with different interests is a key parameter to consider in the construction of European and Mediterranean research in the water sector.

The development of a "Science-Policy" platform is thus needed, and it involves the creation or strengthening of standardized and integrated communication tools. In this regard, it should establish a single portal, "EU Water Platform," which would contain cartography of stakeholders of the sector and of their contacts. This platform could also provide access to relevant scientific and financial information and give easy access not only to European Union's users but also to users of the other interested countries.

The platform should also take their needs into account and guarantee the availability of information for all EU or non-EU interested parties and facilitate knowledge transfer.

Emphasis should be given on training in the practical use of research results. This requires a transcript of the research findings in everyday language.

The current Water Information System for Europe "Research and Technological Development" (WISE-RTD) should be strengthened. The WISE-RTD must be reshaped into an integrated platform for knowledge sharing and structured for giving greater access to the results of research projects, and linking these results to the monitoring data and to indicators to monitor the implementation of European directives on water and related fields.

These proposals should strengthen cooperation between the Working Group on Science and Policy Interface of the WFD Common Implementation Strategy (CIS-SPI) and the key stakeholders of the water sector.

Success will depend on the ability to involve end users in the definition of R&D areas, to the extent that this association is a guarantee of the practical usefulness of research carried out by the scientific community.

Development of EU cooperation with third countries in the field of water should increase

Four years before the 2015 deadline, it is undeniable that the challenges posed by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), especially in the sanitation sector, cannot be achieved without significant support from the European Union to third countries, especially in Africa, but also in EECCA and in the Mediterranean.

Following the recognition of the right to water and sanitation by the UN General Assembly and the Council of Human Rights, the participants in the "EUROPE-INBO 2011" Conference recognized the need to develop common cause to allow access to water and sanitation for all. Innovative financing systems have been presented and the hope that the European authorities encourage this type of initiative was expressed.

The focus can be placed on increasing cooperation between EU local authorities and NGOs and their counterparts in third countries through innovative financial mechanisms such as **the "1% for common cause in the water and sanitation sector"**.

Practical experiences carried out in France, Belgium / Walloon Region, the Netherlands, Spain and Italy and the interest expressed by many other European countries and the OECD Members show the relevance, added value and potential of such an innovative approach.

The expansion and development of this arrangement had the support of the Innovative Partnerships Office of the United Nations Development Program, which set up a platform early 2011 to support the arrangements of local authorities to improve access to water and sanitation for all.

This multi-stakeholder platform proposes EU bodies and the Council of Europe to adopt appropriate provisions for encouraging States to take measures allowing the managers of water and sanitation utilities to voluntarily spend up to at least 1% of their income for national, community and international common cause actions.

It would also be appropriate to strengthen the EU Water Initiative (EUWI), ten years after its launching, which also supports third countries in the efforts made to achieve the MDGs.

It is requested to the European institutions to renew its mandate, to extend its duration until 2025, to reformulate the original objectives in a more ambitious way and, finally, to organize a communication campaign to highlight past performance and future opportunities.

The "EUWI and WFD joint process" is a technical platform for collaboration between countries. It allows the exchange of experience, assessments and discussions about regional characteristics using the WFD as a guideline. This process, successfully tested in the Mediterranean, allows making recommendations that may be used in the EU bilateral support to developing countries. It is therefore advisable to extend it to other regions, especially EECCA.

The participants at the 9th EUROPE-INBO Conference support the call of the Hungarian Presidency of the European Union, supported by the Council of Ministers for the Environment, to make water a priority of the EU assistance-to-development policy towards Third countries.

They called for the EU Member States and the European Commission to define the "2nd EUWI" strategy in close cooperation with partners from different regions, by introducing more support to improve governance, financing mechanisms, transboundary basin management and communication and participation strategies.

A side event of IPEMED (Institut de Prospective Economique du Monde Mediterranéen) was organized for the elaboration of new expertise and governance tools to improve regional cooperation in the water field through: (1) the creation of a Mediterranean Water Knowledge Hub in a first step, (2) a Mediterranean Water Committee in the mid term and (3) on the long term a Mediterranean Regional Water Agency. These proposals will be further discussed on the occasion of the 1st Mediterranean Water Forum in Marrakech in December 2011 and of the 6th World Water Forum in Marseilles.

The "EUROPE-INBO" Group and MENBO members required that the dynamics be restarted for twinning projects between EU Basin Organizations and their counterparts in

neighboring countries of EECCA and the Mediterranean. The **TWINBASIN** project indeed gave significant results, but unfortunately it was not renewed by the European Commission. The EUROPE-INBO Group members requested that they be given new support to continue this initiative that responds effectively to the need for exchanges between basin organizations on their practices and know-how.

The members of CEENBO, Central and Eastern European Network of Basin Organization, presented their project for creating a **"Help Desk"** in order to promote the dissemination of principles and tools of the European Water Framework Directive and other water-related directives, to the Balkans and riparian countries of the Black Sea which are interested.

A "Pact of Marseilles for better river basin management" will be proposed for signature by basin organizations from all over the world in the closing session of the World Water Forum in Marseilles on 16 March, 2012.

The first version of the "Marseilles Pact" could be consulted by INBO member organizations. The participants of the "EUROPE-INBO 2011" Conference in Oporto made proposals for amendments and improvements. The draft will be widely disseminated to the other INBO regional networks and their partners, with the goal of have it signed by the greatest number of partners in Marseilles on 16 March 2012.

Conclusions

For almost 20 years, the "Water Convention" (Helsinki 1992) has provided a sound legal framework for cooperation in the field of transboundary river management in the UNECE region.

After more than ten years of implementation, it is safe to say that the approach of the Water Framework Directive (characterization of the initial status, pressures and impacts, national and international river basin management, definition of measurable goals and strict timetables to achieve them, management plans and programs of measures, information systems, reporting and monitoring, economic approach, public participation, etc.) is already an example of a **successful solution** in a wide area concerning more than 27 Countries.

The approach and method used in WFD implementation can inspire other parts of the world, starting with the non-EU member Mediterranean countries and neighboring countries of the European Union, especially those which share transboundary basins with the EU Member States.

The WFD principles and tools can find a suitable application in all countries willing to deal decisively and jointly with their neighbors with the specific problems they encounter.

The principles of good governance and integrated management promoted by the Directive are valid anywhere in the world and thus deserve a wide dissemination.

The **"fitness check"** study, recently launched by the European Commission consists in checking whether European regulations achieve their objectives effectively, efficiently and consistently. At the end of this process, the EU will have an overview of the application of its water regulations and will be able to design what adaptation, revision or new provisions deserve to be applied.

This study confirms, in its first report received in September under the SGC, the WFD value for the countries of the European Union, and the positive points of its implementation, together with other EU water regulations.

The obligations issued by the European water policy have been met. In terms of administrative cooperation and coordination of national policies, there are greater transparency in the implementation, improved communication, joint use of resources by the administrative entities involved (both within and between regions of different Member States) and stronger incentives to prevent and solve transboundary conflicts. The Directive has had a significant spill-over effect.

However, limitations remain. The Member States are reluctant to put water at the core of priorities on the political agenda and it is sometimes difficult to make the transition from centralized management at the national level to decentralized management in basins.

These successes should not obscure the fact that the implementation of this directive is still very uneven.

Improvements seem unavoidable considering the shortcomings observed. For instance, the Directive is sometimes vague, as for the establishment of water pricing or the definition of the principle of cost recovery.

The establishment of a hierarchy of priorities of competing uses is still insufficient as well as the assessment of water effectiveness in the major water consumer sectors or those affected by water stress.

It is necessary to strengthen the link between general planning of land use and the planning specific to flood risk or establish water efficiency standards in the sectors which are the biggest water consumers.

The consistency of objectives, implementation methods and timetables of certain directives with the WFD must also be clarified (e.g., case of the provisions of the Directive on *Strategic Environmental Impact Assessment* compared to the basin management plan and / or the program of measures). The relations between the WFD and the Directive on "integrated pollution prevention and reduction" (IPPC) remain problematic.

It should be noted that the integration of the European water policy with other sectoral policies is less successful at this stage, and the river basin Management Plans as instruments of cross-sectoral integration should be strengthened.

Taking into account the existing interdependencies between water policy and agricultural, energy and environmental policies is still in its infancy.

The "greening" of the CAP does not adequately compensate for the negative externalities (pressure on water quality and quantity) for which agriculture is made responsible.

Particular attention should be paid in the future to achieve significant progresses in the integration of water, navigation and energy policies.

Similarly, the environmental dimension (and that of water in particular) has been so far a poor parent in allocations of the European Cohesion Fund and should more often benefit from such assistance in the future

The advantage of integrated river basin management, which allows overcoming the administrative borders and strengthening basin authorities as real bodies for managing water resources and aquatic environments should further be emphasized.

Despite these imperfections, the WFD and, more generally, the European water policy are a set of relevant "practical solutions" to advance in the resolution of current problems and, hopefully, prepare for the future

The participants of the "EUROPE-INBO 2011" Conference in Oporto wish to present its conclusions to the SCG (Strategic Coordination Group) and especially to get involved with the DG Environment of the European Commission in the preparation of solutions relating to priority 2 of the Regional European Process of the World Water Forum, which deals with "the achievement of good ecological status of European water bodies in 2015".

The "EUROPE-INBO 2011" conference was an important step in the assessment of the WFD implementation, to make proposals and recommendations for its improvement, and also to organize active participation of all interested organizations in the Regional European Preparatory Process of the 6th World Water Forum.

The participants thanked France and especially Mr. Laurent Fayein, President of the French Rhone, Mediterranean and Corsica Water Agency for having fulfilled with determination the EUROPE-INBO Group presidency during the year 2010/2011.

They gratefully accepted Turkey's proposal to host the next conference of the EUROPE-INBO Group in Istanbul in the fall of 2012.

The Delegates thanked the Portuguese Authorities, the ARHNorte (River Basin Administration of Northern Portugal) and other regional administrations of Portugal for their excellent hospitality and for the excellent organization of this 9th Conference.

Mr. Antonio Guerreiro De Brito, President of ARH Norte (Portugal), was elected President of the EUROPE-INBO Group for the year to come, until the next conference to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, in 2012.

The next "EUROPE-INBO 2012" conference will be an opportunity to take advantage of the feedback from the World Water Forum in Marseilles and discuss future extensions, especially for launching the next cycles (2015-2021 and 2021-2027) of WFD implementation.

On its side, the 9th General Assembly of the Mediterranean Network of Basin Organizations – MENBO - approved two new members, the ARH Norte (Portugal) and the Arno River Basin Authority (Italy). Additionally, it welcomed the Land Research Center (Palestine) as observer. MENBO counts now on 33 members from 16 Mediterranean countries.

MENBO General Assembly took note of the plan of activities and projects that the Network achieved in the last two years since the 7th General Assembly in Beirut 2009.

The participants thanked Lebanon and especially Mr. Fadi Comair, General Director for Water and Energy, for his enthusiasm, determination and new initiatives launched during his MENBO Presidency (2009-2011).

Mr. Antonio Guerreiro De Brito, President of ARH Norte (Portugal), was elected new President of MENBO until the next General Assembly in 2013.

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED IN OPORTO ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2011

The Final Declaration, all papers and photographs of the conference are available on the website: www.inbo-news.org