

European process of the 6th World Water Forum: Summary of the main outputs

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A MOBILIZED EUROPE AT THE 6th World Water Forum!

For the first time since The Hague edition (2000), the World Water Forum took place in the Old Continent. A unique opportunity for Europe to showcase progress made and future projects.

2012 is an highly symbolic step for water in Europe: declared the “European Year of Water” by the European Union Commissioner in charge of water, it also marks the tenth anniversary of the European Union Initiative for Water (EUWI) and the twentieth anniversary of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes of the United-Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE).

Beyond, 2012 is a year of action for Europe which was strongly mobilized for the 6th World Water Forum in Marseille and has bring a substantial contribution to this “Time for solutions”.

An unprecedented European mobilization

Never in the previous editions of the Forum has Europe been as active as it was during this one.

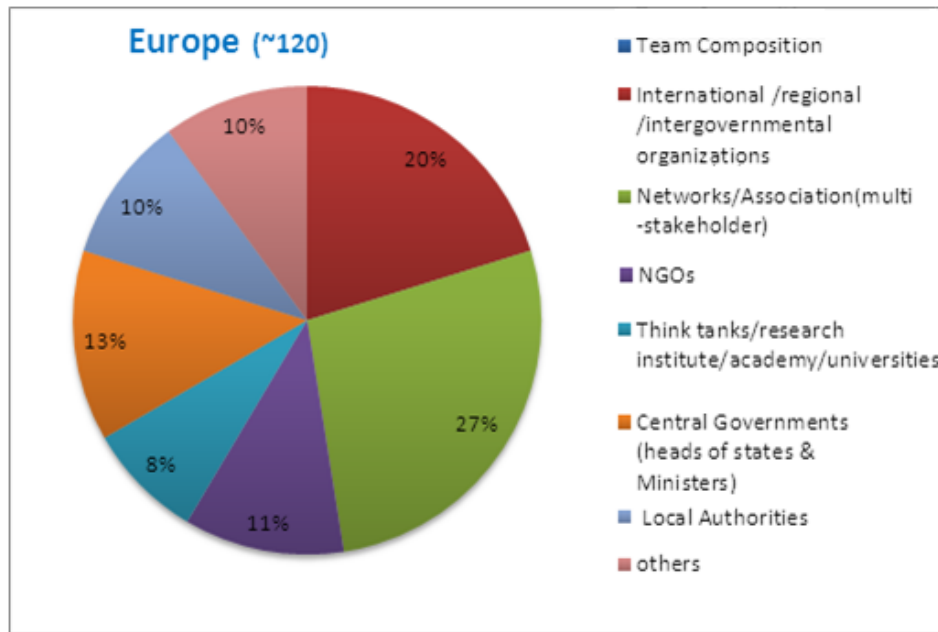
Mobilization has been widespread, in tense and high level.

The European process was indeed very inclusive. Its geographical framework goes far beyond the European Union borders and encompasses not only Norway and Switzerland but also the Balkans, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, the Russian Federation and more broadly most of the Member States of the UNECE.

During nearly two years, following the “WISE” approach supported by the International Committee of the Forum (Wide Involvement Stakeholders Exchanges), over a hundred organizations were involved in the European preparatory process.

Every kind of actors was represented. Of course, as for the previous editions, public institutions, either national or intergovernmental, have shown strong commitment. This assessment is equally true with regard to the private sector and professional organizations. However, for the 6th World Water Forum, Europe particularly distinguished itself by ensuring a large and meaningful participation of NGOs, civil society representatives and local authorities.

Figure 1 The diversity of institutional actors involved in the European preparatory process¹



A dozen institutions were directly in charge of organizing European sessions, and that included:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o UNECE o European Commission (and in particular DGs Environment, Action Climate, Research and Innovation, Cooperation and Development) o Swiss Federal Office for the Environment o International Commission for the Scheldt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o French Council of Agriculture o Voies Navigables de France o EURELECTRIC o Solidarity Water Europe o EUREAU o European Centre for River Restoration (ECRR) o Martinique Water Office o pS-Eau |
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Europe's acute interest for the 6th World Water Forum was confirmed at Marseille with the participation of high level officials: the Executive Secretary of the UNECE, European Union Commissioner in charge of Climate, the Environment, Development and Cooperation, International Cooperation, Humanitarian aid and Crisis response as well as the Director General of the Joint Research Center of the EU (JRC), the French Ministry of European affairs, the French Ambassador in charge of international climate negotiations, the Russian Vice-Minister of Natural resources, the Romanian Minister of the Environment and the Moldovan Minister of the Environment.

Addressing well circumscribed issues

In the months preceding the event as well as during the Forum's sessions, organizations involved have worked on issues defined in advance during the preparatory meetings of the European process held on the 21st Décembre 2010 (Brussels) and on the 18th January 2011 (Paris).

In order to ensure successful debates and the emergence of relevant solutions, these "targets" were elaborated following the "SMART" concept adopted by the International Committee of the Forum: in other words, they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound.

Finally, twelve issues were chosen for the European region:

¹ Source : World Water Forum Secretariat.

EU1. Good practices for transboundary water cooperation in Europe
EU2. Achieving good status of Europe's water resources
EU3. Adapting to climate change in Europe
EU4. Towards a water-friendly European agriculture

EU5. Inland waterways, a multi-usage network
EU6. Sustainable hydropower
EU7. Access to water and sanitation for unprivileged population
EU8. Sustainable financing of water and sanitation services: applying the "3Ts"

EU9. Protection and restoration of river ecosystems
EU10. Science/Policy interface
EU11. Adapting water management to the specificities of European Outermost regions
EU12. Develop cooperation with Third countries

Was also prepared, in addition to these twelve targets, a "Triologue", that is to say a subject that a regional process of the Forum wishes to open up to discussion between for levels of government: ministerial, parliamentarian, local & regional. The European Triologue gave to these interdependent powers the opportunity to initiate fruitful discussions on how to improve and extend solidarity mechanisms such as the French Oudin-Santini Law. This mechanism allow local authorities and basin agencies to allocate up to 1% of their budget related to water services and sanitation to projects of international cooperation in the field of water.

Hence, these thirteen targets cover a wide range of general thematic related to water and:

- economic activities (inland navigation, agriculture, energy)
- the environment (water bodies and water-related ecosystems' health, climate changes' impacts)
- international cooperation (transboundary cooperation, support to Third countries, decentralized cooperation)
- financing (water and sanitation services management)
- science and technology (science/policy interface)
- a socially just and fair governance (access to water)

However, although these thematic are rather general, each of them match a very specific issue. For instance, discussions on European legislation were mainly focused on the Water Framework Directive and its good status objective and energy and agricultural matters were articulated around the idea of seemingly contradictory interests between economic activities (hydropower and irrigated agriculture) and our water bodies health. This logic (extracting specific issues from rather diverse thematics) helped avoid the usual pitfall of endless hollow speeches on considerations of a general nature.

Indeed, the thirteen two-hours sessions organized during the Forum week were remarkable in that they provided interventions of more than 150 experts and high ranking guests with clear, relevant, pragmatic and rather concise presentations leaving enough room for questions & answers in often fully packed rooms.

Progress made and future projects

Europe, a good student?

Europe is –often rightfully, considered a good student when it comes to water management. Indeed, under the impetus of regional organizations, States of the continent have set for themselves ambitious objectives as well as relevant tools to achieve them.

For instance, at a paneuropean level, the 39 States which have ratified the UNECE Convention on Water are legally obliged to cooperate and jointly manage their transboundary resources. The text elaborates on the principles and good practices to apply in order to get an optimal management.

In addition, European Union Member States have to fulfill legal obligations intended to better manage the blue gold. To pick one example out of the robust legislative corpus in place, the Water Framework Directive set the 2015 deadline for the attainment of the good ecological and chemical status of Member States water bodies, and it describes the means to get there (River Basin Management Plans and Programmes of Measures).

Remaining challenges

Although real progress in the management and health of water bodies has been recorded, many challenges still lie ahead, as clearly demonstrated by the choice of targets for the European regional process.

The quality of the resource and its related ecosystems on the one hand, and the interests of certain economic sectors such as agriculture, inland navigation and hydropower on the other hand, these are priorities that still seem hard to conciliate. Besides, in spite of their inestimable value, these ecosystems are really given short shrift. On the opposite, adaptation to climate change did receive a growing attention; however, so far, it failed to be translated into action. Action, again, continue to lag with regard to the implementation of existing conventions and legislations: every stakeholders recognize the relevance of their provisions and is, at the same time, reluctant to apply them. Besides, it is worth noting that there are substantial discrepancies between western Europe on the one hand, and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, Central Asia and the Balkans on the other hand: the legislations' level of requirements as well as the quality and financing of water and sanitation services are far better in the first area than in the second one. Moreover, as a combined effect of climate change, demographic development and growing food and energy demands, the pressure on the resource is likely to increase and further complicate sustainable financing and cost recovery of water and sanitation services.

Recommendations and future projects

Recommendations and future projects that emerged along the preparatory process and throughout the Forum week give some good reason to be confident in the of European water actors' ability to meet these challenges.

Legal framework

It has been noted that the existing legal framework has to be fully implemented in order to deliver results and ensure the success of already planned extensions or upgrades. The European Commission is indeed evaluating its legislative corpus related to water through the **Fitness Check exercise** and will revise it through the **"Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources"**, which will be released in November 2012. Besides, it is expected that in a very near future, **new ratifications of 2003 amendments will open the 1992 Water Convention to countries outside the UNECE.**

From integrated management to "Nexus"

The necessity to manage water in an integrated manner, taking into account all the water uses at basin level, has been reaffirmed strongly during the World Water Forum. The river basin is indeed a geographic entity, comprising both surface and groundwaters, in front of which the notions of political or administrative borders are irrelevant. To this regard, commitments made under the **Astana Water Action (AWA) of the UNECE** and several outputs of the Forum are encouraging: **substantial agreements (e.g. Kura, Tisza river) aiming at the integrated management of transboundary watercourses** have been signed during the preparatory process, the RIOB's **World Pact for better basin management** has been adopted by 69 basin organizations from 33 countries and the publication of **the Handbook for integrated water resources management in transboundary**

basins (AFD, GEF, GWP, INBO, UNECE, UNESCO) has encountered an outstanding success. The quest for a better integration is also initiated within sectors, as it has been the case for navigation. The World Water Forum was the occasion to discuss the future of **PLATINA, the platform which supports the “Integrated European Action Programme for Inland Waterway Transport” (NAIADES)**. This programme creates favourable conditions for inland navigation services through a comprehensive set of measures with the long term objective of developing a Pan-European Inland Navigation network.

It has been voiced out that Integrated Water Resources Management is doomed to fail if its formulation is not followed by a real integration of sectoral policies related to water (agriculture, energy, transport, climate) as advocated through the **“Nexus” approach**. European Commission **proposal on the Common Agricultural Policy reform** seems to be a step in the right direction. It is crucial to support concrete initiatives undertaken following this logic throughout Europe. Good examples have been presented, either from the public (In **France renewal of hydropower concessions by basin, sustainable hydropower convention** between energy producers and the State) or private sector (**contractualization/labellization in return of voluntary measures** aiming at an improved management of the resource).

Water: a value and a price?

Participants to the European process have expressed their conviction that **incentive pricing** is a major leverage for a deeper integration of policies related to water. Hence, it is crucial to send clear “price signals” to all water users, in line with the consumer/polluter-pays principle.

Sustainable financing of water and sanitation services would be strengthened by such measure. Tariff is indeed one of the three elements to take into account when applying the “3Ts” approach (Tariffs, Taxes and Transfers) promoted by the OECD as a viable solution for the financial balance of these essential services. At the World Water Forum, EUREAU published a **methodological guide intended to assist water and sanitation services’ managers in implementing the “3Ts”**.

As a continuation of the ongoing debate on the economic valuation of ecosystems services, participants to the European sessions insisted on the necessity to ensure water-related ecosystems protection and restoration: in addition to highly legitimate environmental and symbolic considerations, it has to be acknowledged that the economic value of ecosystems far outstrip the value of sectors that both depend on and negatively affect them (agriculture, fisheries, transport, energy, tourism). Many actors (e.g. ECRR, GWP, ICPDR, Danube Delta Institute, ONEMA, EWA, INBO) committed to launch projects of protection and restoration of water bodies.

Experience sharing

Although the European situation is on average considered satisfactory, there remain some significant discrepancies between State with regard to the level of sophistication of water management. A simple, relatively cheap and remarkably efficient way to move toward a general improvement consist in promoting experience and good practices sharing between managers and users of different States in every economic sectors. It is precisely the objective of **European twinnings** which should be encouraged. It is also the main idea behind the creation of the **Network of Island-Basins**, announced in Marseille. It responds to the need expressed by European outermost regions to exchange between themselves on how to adapt water management policies and legislations to their specific context.

Experience sharing must not be limited to water management “macro” aspects: it also has to aim targeted changes which make easier to demonstrate the interest of such exchanges for improving people’s daily lives. For this reason, the European Regional office of the World Health Organization and the UNECE have released during the Forum a **guide on Good practices to ensure equitable access to water and sanitation in the pan-European region**. In order to ensure its optimal and sustainable implementation, its contributors will elaborate and put to the national administrations’ disposal “equitable access” indicators and other self-assessment tools to evaluate progress made.

Knowledge building

Knowledge building is key to the improvement of water management. The European process hence recommends to promote an enhanced interface between science and policy. The objectives include a better alignment between research projects and water managers/users needs. In order to avoid duplication and resulting wastage of human/financial resources, strengthening this interface must primarily be achieved through the development of existing projects such as the **IWRM-net** (research activities aimed at facilitating the implementation of IWRM as prescribed by the Water Framework Directive), the **“European Innovation Partnership on Water”**, the **Euro Mediterranean Water Information System – EMWIS** or the more recent **Waterdiss** and **Mediterranean Water Knowledge Hub**.

Mitigating and adapting to climate change

The lack of knowledge is particularly acute when it comes to climate change. It is of the utmost importance to encourage and support projects which aim at developing our understanding of climate change impacts on given regions (mountains with the **Alp-Water-Scarce project**) or economic activities (agriculture with the **FACCE-JPI research project**).

Beyond knowledge, combating climate change require dedicated investments. In view of the Multiannual Financial Framework –the EU's budget for 2014-2020, **the European Commission's proposal include the allocation of 20% of the structural funds to energy efficiency and renewable energies**.

Besides, the European Commissioner for Climate Action has announced during the Forum the launch of the **CLIMATE ADAPT internet platform**, which centralizes adaptation solutions tested in Europe in order to increase the efficiency of policies undertaken at local, national and regional level (strategic adaptation plan, case studies, tools supporting adaptation planning and implementation).

Adaptation strategies will have to follow the recommendations of the European Union (**Europe 2020 strategy flagship initiative for a resource-efficient Europe**) and the UNECE (**Guidance on Water and Adaptation to Climate Change**). Their success will depend on reflections and inclusion of water demand management options. Measures intended to improve water efficiency of every uses and the definition of standards for water recycling and reuse have to be part of these strategies. They could build on examples of context-specific good practices put forward by the **Network of European pilot basin organizations applying adaptation measures**.

Solidarity and cooperation

In spite of the crisis, Europe has clearly reaffirmed, during the 6th World Water Forum, that it was willing to maintain a high level of financial support in favor of solidarity and partnership projects. The Forum was indeed an opportunity to discuss how to **extend innovative solidarity mechanisms** such as the French model of Decentralized cooperation (Oudin-Santini Law), which allow local authorities and basin agencies to allocate up to 1% of their budget related to water services and sanitation to projects of international cooperation in the field of water.

This promising lead is a straight continuation of Europe's commitment. Since 2002 and the launch of the European Water Initiative - EUWI, the European Union has turned water development projects into one of the main focus of its international cooperation policy, following the underlying objective of the Millennium Development Goals attainment. In 2011, the Council of Foreign affairs Ministers of the European Union has called for a **“Second generation EUWI”**, which should more clearly integrate sectoral policies in its development projects. This revitalized EUWI will be granted significant financial means. It will allow the continuation of ongoing projects, such as **National Policy Dialogues on water resources management (IWRM) and water supply and sanitation (WSS)** launched in a dozen countries of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.

The EUWI is envisioned as an ambitious policy that also aims at partnership, reciprocity and mutual benefits. The EU-China River Basin Programme is a good example: it resulted in **the creation of an China-EU Water Platform – CEWP** which fosters exchanges of expertise, technologies and professional training and pave the way for joint industrial and research projects.

The success of this type of cooperation is echoed at bilateral level between Member States and EU partners. Indeed, **a franco-chinese partnership agreement for a pilot project on the Hai river** has been concluded and includes exchange of experiences on IWRM, protection and restoration of ecosystems, the application of the polluter-pays principle and regulatory mechanisms for discharges and water withdrawals.

Perspectives...

Throughout the preparatory process and during the Forum week, fruitful discussions between European water actors and their partners have allowed to take the debate forward. Strong messages, relevant recommendations and promising projects have been identified. It is now Europe responsibility to bring this contribution to the attention of the world leaders in order to get water rightfully included in the political agenda of the next pit stop in the journey to define and make sustainable development a reality: the forthcoming Rio+20 world summit.

ANNEXE :

Annex 1. List of European sessions coordinators:

Specific European Priority Target	Coordinating organization
EU1. Good practices for transboundary water cooperation in Europe	UNECE
EU2. Achieving good status of Europe's water resources	DG Environment
EU3. Adapting to climate change in Europe	DG Climate action
EU4. Towards a water-friendly european agriculture	French Agriculture Council
EU5 Inland waterways, a multi-usage network	Voies Navigables de France
EU6 Sustainable hydropower	EURELECTRIC
EU7 Access to water and sanitation for unprivileged population	Solidarity Water Europe
EU8 Sustainable financing of water and sanitation services: applying the "3Ts"	EUREAU
EU9. Protection and restoration of river ecosystems	ERRC
EU10. Science/Policy interface	ONEMA
EU11. Adapting water management to the specificities of European Outermost regions	Martinique Office for Water
EU12. Develop cooperation with Third countries	DG Development and Cooperation
European Trialogue. European Action for Worldwide Universal Access to Water and Sanitation: Fostering Mechanisms of Solidarity	pS-Eau

Annex 2. Non-exhaustive list of institutions/representatives involved in the European regional process of the 6th World Water Forum

National public institutions/representatives :

- Ministries in charge of Water, Environment, Agriculture or Foreign affairs of many European countries, including :
 - o the French Ministry of European affairs
 - o the French Ambassador in charge of international climate negotiations
 - o the Russian Vice-Minister of Natural resources
 - o the Romanian Minister of the Environment
 - o the Moldovan Minister of the Environment
- Water, Environment or Agriculture Ministries of many European States
- Swedish agency in charge of freshwater and marine resources management
- French Institute for agricultural research (Institut national de la recherche agronomique – INRA)
- Voies Navigables de France - VNF
- French Development Agency (AFD)
- French National Agency for Water and Aquatic Environments - ONEMA

Intergovernmental institutions :

- United Nations Development Programme
- United Nations Environment Programme
- European Development Bank
- World Meteorological Organization
- European Environment Agency
- International Fund for saving the Aral sea
- European Commission and:
 - o European Union Commissioner in charge of Climate
 - o European Union Commissioner in charge of the Environment
 - o European Union Commissioner in charge of Cooperation
 - o European Union Commissioner in charge of Solidarity
 - o Director General of the Joint Research Center of the EU (JRC)
- UNECE and its Executive Secretary
- OECD
- UNESCO

Companies :

- Vittel
- Suez
- Saur
- EDF
- Lafarge

Professional organization :

- FP2E
- COPA-COGECA
- Société Hydroélectrique de France
- Chambers of agriculture
- French Agriculture Council
- Permanent International Association of Navigation Congresses - PIANC

NGOs :

- PsEau

- Green Cross
- WWF
- GWP
- Caucasus Environmental NGO Network (CENN)
- Solidarity Water Europe
- Wetlands International

Basin organizations and networks :

- French basin agencies
- Confederación Hidrográfica del Júcar
- ICPDR
- International Commission for the Scheldt
- Dniester Prut Basin Administration
- International Network of Basin Organizations and its regional components (EECCA-NBO, MENBO, EURO-INBO, CEENBO)

Local authorities :

- Committee of the Regions
- United Cities and *Local* Governments - UCLG
- International Association of French speaking mayor (Association Internationale des Maires Francophones - AIMF)
- French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (AFCCRE)