

## First cycle River Basin Management Plans under our control?

European Community has faced the important challenges to recover the good status of water bodies in 2015 as required by Water Framework Directive. Water in rivers, estuaries and coasts will hopefully improve under measures set up in River Basin Management Plans drawn up for river basin districts across Europe.



What was our CCB member organizations' input to the planning process of RBMP in our countries?

Have we taken part in the consultation process or we've lost our chance for the influence?

I am going to describe in short my experiences as NGOs' (Polish Ecological Club) representative at Regional Upper Vistula Basin Board for Water Management in Gliwice, Poland and CCB Water Policy Officer at the same time. My educational background (Sanitary Engineering at Technical University) have helped me a lot, but I've found the issues of WFD hard and complicated enough "thanks" to their interdisciplinary character of many sophisticated branches of techniques, economy, nature and social science - deserving the integrated water resources approach.

The consultation process in Poland was carried both on regional and national levels by spreading the info on the possibility of participation, by direct mailing and sending out the questionnaires (> 20 000 copies sent out / 25% received back) and using the local municipalities, schools, NGOs, members of regional boards and media. Every citizen could send his/her opinion to the drafts of documents available on the home page of Water Authorities ([www.kzgw.org.pl](http://www.kzgw.org.pl)), filling up the electronic version of questionnaire.

I have gained a lot in scope of watershed knowledge, participating at several seminars and public meetings during that 3-phases' consultations period of time (June 2008 – July 2009) when I've been facing the different and complicated problems occurring at the river basin planning process.

Identification of the Significant Water Management Issues (SWMI) for Vistula vast river basin (168 700 km<sup>2</sup>) with the use of 2-pages questionnaire was made at very general level, as well as actions and its results foreseen at its RBMP; you could simply point out the priorities to the list of SWMI depending on your opinion upon the situation or local interest. That's why we have decided for written statements. The SWM Issue "*Insufficient sanitation of rural and touristic areas*" I have commented with sustainable sanitation solutions as measures to be undertaken and foreseen in action plans of RBMPs. My organization has sent 3 letters to regional and national Water Authorities to promote decentralized, sustainable wastewater systems for rural areas and single family homes. We have also argued for nitrate sensitive areas in Poland (to be enlarged over 1,5% of territory) and financing priorities for Good Agriculture Practices which prevent negative impact of agriculture production to surface and underground water bodies.

I was able to observe the debates of III National Water Forum – taking part in two-days conference and workshop for water stakeholders from all the country (~300 people) with presence of Water Authorities and authors of RBMPs' drafts. My input to conference findings was the written statement to the President of National Water Management Board – lobbying for sustainable sanitation for small settlements.

There was another action taken in sake of WFD implementation on European level.

End of January 2009 was the deadline to fill in 17 pages of "*An overall assessment headline indicators QUESTIONNAIRE*" issued for EEB's and WWF's networks, CCB was invited to.

The headline indicators to assess the process of WFD development were established as follows:

1. Transparent and publicly owned water management
2. Reducing water wastage
3. More space for living waters
4. Healthy safe water, people and water
5. Visionary and adaptive water policies

I have chosen the draft of RBMP for Vistula river basin to be assessed after its publication in the middle of December 2009. At the same time I have sent the invitation to all CCB member organizations to try this challenge. The only organization involved in the survey was Finnish Association for Nature Conservation. The Danish NGOs could not work on it because of delay in RBMPs preparation and publication. The rest of Baltic EU countries' (Lithuania, Latvia, Sweden, Germany) NGOs, members of CCB have not answered the proposal.

Answering numerous of the detailed questions dealing with number of problems connecting with river basin planning issues I could realize how fragmentary information I have received studying the publicized materials (draft of Vistula RBMP);

→reference documents missing, →the data for a specific water body not available, →alternative solutions not discussed, →biological reference conditions and the specific environmental objectives not determined, →monitoring system not established completely, →water saving objectives not expressed directly for every sector, →wetland restoration neglected/not mentioned, →non-engineering flood management absent, →specific restoration objectives of waters in protected areas not established, →no proposition of economic measures for environmental objectives etc.

Each surveyed basin was assessed by a system of points by EEB/WWF specialists and European Rivers League Table (with 23 river basins) was prepared and officially published in June as a part of the "What's future for EU waters" technical report and brochure. This material has been used for comparison the river management plans and lobbying in Brussels (Water Conference of EC) and on the national level. The analysis has found none of the draft plans rates well across a range of water safety, conservation and management measures. Public consultation on the draft river plans was closed at the end of June. EU Member States will have to finalise their water plans by the end of the year and send them to the European Commission. It is not clear to what extent the consultation process has influenced the final version of RBMPs. For me personally taking part in the survey was profitable to learn more about the river basin approach through assessment indicators, to compare the situation in river basin planning around Europe and realize how far we are behind the leading countries. Monitoring the process of WFD development made me aware to be more active in controlling it in the next planning cycle.

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