

# **Implementing the EU Water Framework Directive**

## **Issues and challenges**

**Pierre Strosser  
Ministry of Agriculture, France**

# Why the Water Framework Directive (WFD) ?

- **Ensuring/providing water policy coherence**
  - From 16 different pieces of legislation to a common policy framework
- **Promoting new water management principles and approaches**

# Towards adoption of the WFD

- **Five years of discussions and negotiation**
- **An open policy debate**
- **A political agreement at the end of the conciliation process between Council and Parliament (co-legislators)**
- **The outcome:**
  - An agreement on key principles
  - But divergent views on their level of application
  - A complex 72 page text to be implemented...

# Key elements of the WFD

- **Good water status (ecology, quality, quantity)**
- **All waters (surface, ground, transitional, coastal)**
- **River basin**
- **Coherent planning and assessment process (2009, 2015, 2027...)**
- **The role of economics**
  - Economic assessment
  - Pricing (incentive, cost-recovery)
- **Information, consultation, participation**
- **Enhanced monitoring**

# Overall, it promotes

- **Transparency**
- **A new process and decision-making mode**
- **Integration**

# **Key issues for implementation – “Technical” issues**

- **Ecological objectives, inter-calibration between different ecosystems**
- **Economic assessment (river basin, environmental costs, integrating scales)**
- **Integration between disciplines and expertise**
- **Scenario and prospective analysis (river basin scale)**
- **Risk and uncertainty**

# **Key issues for implementation – process-related issues**

- **Expertise, capacity building**
- **Information**
- **Effective participation**
  - For large river basins (combining institutions from the democratic process, new institutions)
- **Developing synergies between different spatial and decision making scales**

# **Key issues for implementation – Developing conditions for success**

- **Allocating adequate financial and human resources**
  - All actors
- **Developing the demand for change**
  - Political level (national, international)
  - Government departments (we know, we do)

# Where we will be in 2015

- **Pessimistic scenario**

- little efforts made for implementation, “reporting” compliance, little changes in water status, lack of effective participation, status quo

- **Optimistic scenario**

- changes in management modes, effective platform for collaboration, water status improvement in majority of water bodies, still problems in some but adequate process for solving them in the long-term

# **Four trumps for the optimistic scenario**

- **Close to the heart of the water community**
- **Already many actions developed (Member States, candidate countries, stakeholders)**
- **Close to the international agenda (pressure for implementation)**
- **Strengthening the enforcement of env. legislation**
- **The Common Implementation Strategy**

# Key elements of the Common Implementation Strategy

- **Agreed in May 2001**
  - by the water directors of the EU Member States and the European Commission (May 2001)
- **Objectives**
  - sharing information, developing common knowledge and expertise for supporting implementation
- **Key principles**
  - Sharing resources, transparency, involvement of stakeholders/candidate countries, *real-life* testing
- **Specific organizational structure**
  - Working groups, strategic group, water directors, forum

# Is the WFD an innovation?

- **None (?) of its components is an innovation**
  - Ecological objectives, river basin, economic assessment, participation
- **Today, innovation lies with**
  - It's a legislation
  - The overall integration of the different components
  - The process for implementation at the EU scale

# In conclusion, key political/policy challenges ahead

- **The transboundary dimension**
  - Building an EU water community, developing effective transboundary management
- **The change in governance paradigm**
  - What the law says is the truth - How the experts interpret the law is the truth - What the process delivers gives the truth
- **Integration with non-water policies (coherence)**
  - Sector policies (agriculture, energy, transport), structural and cohesion policies
- **What will be tomorrow's innovations?**
  - Implementation in 64 river basins, research