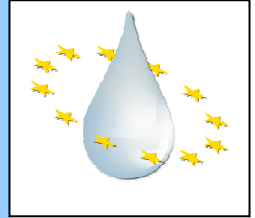


WISE Newsletter

The bulletin of the Water Information System for Europe

Issue n°3 - June 2006



FOREWORD

The interest for information disseminated through the WISE newsletter has been confirmed by the increased readership noticed with the 2nd edition (December 2005). This reflects the results of strengthened awareness about the needs to exchange views, knowledge and best practices among different communities (policy, stakeholders, scientists) to overall improve the implementation of marine and water policies.

From the start of my new function as Head of Unit of the Water & Marine Unit in January 2006, I have come across the great challenges of policy development and implementation in the marine and water sectors, which involve a range of different actors and multidisciplinary synergies.

In particular, the continuous exchanges in various expert groups as they are conducted under the informal consultation of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) of the WFD have confirmed the mutual benefits of the strong partnership established among the Member States and the European institutions, which link policy implementation to knowledge-based strategies.

At the informal meeting of Water Directors of the European Union, candidate and EFTA countries held in Salzburg on 1-2 June, key issues that have to be looked at in close cooperation among the different actors were discussed. This meeting enabled examination of the main outputs of the 3rd phase of the CIS (2005-2006), and agreement on orientations to be given to the work programme for the period 2007-2009.

This second semester of 2006 will be very active with respect to policy development. Firstly, the conciliation process (expected to start in early September) of the Groundwater Directive should enable its adoption before the end of the year. Secondly, the second reading of the Flood Directive should also be completed under the Finnish Presidency.

Thirdly, the proposal of the Priority Substances (daughter) directive will be adopted by the Commission this summer, and the first reading is planned this autumn. Finally, the Marine Strategy will be one of the priorities of the Finnish Presidency.

Active developments are also expected regarding implementation, in particular the design of the WFD monitoring programmes, and the further progress of WISE which integrates reporting of various water directives.

This third issue of the WISE Newsletter covers developments in water and marine policies which have occurred during the first semester of 2006.

I am very happy to come back to the water field after several years in the air policy sector, and very much look forward to actively contribute to the development of our ambitious marine and water policies.

My best wishes for a relaxing summer break.

Peter GAMMELTOFT

Head of the Water & Marine unit at DG ENV



The WISE Newsletter is the information bulletin of the Water & Marine unit of the Environment General-Directorate of the European Commission.

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The Water & Marine unit says goodbye and thanks stagiaires for their efficient contributions to policy activities, namely Marieke Van Nood (WFD Team) and Dagmar Spangenberg (Groundwater). A special farewell goes to Ingrid Pesce, with warm thanks from the WFD Team in which she has been a very efficient secretary for the past 5 years. She is now in post at DG EAC.

To the three of them, we wish the greatest success in the continuation of their careers!

Our new Irish colleague, Conor Clenaghan, is welcome; he will take care of the development of the new daughter directive on Priority Substances.

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WISE Implementation

State of development

DG Environment (in particular the Water and Marine Unit) is closely working together with the European Environment Agency, Eurostat and the Joint Research Centre to develop a Water Information System for Europe (WISE). Following the agreement between the four partners on the WISE implementation plan for 2006-2010, developments in many areas have started. The main priorities for the partners are as follows: Eurostat is in charge of developing guidelines for GIS issues around WISE, the JRC is developing synchronisation mechanisms between "WISE nodes" and preparing data for the public viewer, EEA is taking care of the user interface, the public website and viewer developments. This work is supported by the EEA topic centre on water, which will focus on preparing and integrating the data inputs. DG Environment is focussing on the development of the compliance reporting tools and is providing the necessary political support and much of the coordination with the EU member states.

WISE shall be operational and publicly launched during the World Water Day on 22 March 2007 (see below). While this will mark a milestone for the initial WISE developments and increase visibility of both the member state contributions and European water issues – it is only the beginning of a fully shared development of the European water information system as planned until 2010. Between now and then, the amount and variety of data, the level of integration and the number of connected WISE nodes will increase.

For those interested in observing the ongoing developments, a version of the WISE prototype and some test services are publicly available at: <http://dataservice.eea.europa.eu/wise>.

In parallel, progress is being made on the WISE-RTD web portal (see issue N°2 of the WISE Newsletter), for which a demonstration is planned at the Finnish Water Director meeting at the end of November 2006. More information will be provided in the December issue of the newsletter.

WISE Public Launch and European Conference

As indicated above, on 22 and 23 March 2007, the European Commission will organise a European Water Conference in Brussels. For this conference (mentioned in WFD article 18(5)), stakeholders, politicians and Member States administrations will be invited to discuss water management in the EU.

Part of this conference will be the presentation of the Commission's WFD Implementation Progress Report. Moreover, the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) will be launched to the public on 22 March 2007, World Water Day. The version to be launched will contain a public viewer interface on the Water Framework Directive implementation results so far, including the results of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and the European Environment Information and Observation Network on water (EIONET/water).

Further information on the EU Water Conference will be provided after summer.

Water Framework Directive

State of Implementation

In the first issue of the WISE newsletter in June 2005 we informed about compliance with the reporting obligations of Member States regarding the implementation of the Water Framework Directive. The information on the Europa web site has been updated to reflect the latest submissions:

<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/environment/water/water-framework/scoreboard.html>

Up to June 2006:

- 23 Member States have notified the transposition of the Directive (due December 2003) – all except Luxembourg and Belgium (only for Brussels Region is missing).
- 24 Member States have submitted the Article 3 reports on river basin districts and competent authorities (due June 2004) - all except Italy
- 24 Member States have submitted the Article 5 reports on characterisation of River Basin Districts, pressure and impact study and economic analysis (March 2005) – all except Italy.

This means 95% of the reporting obligations have been fulfilled. All Article 3 and Article 5 reports have been made publicly available through the WFD CIRCA information system:

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/implementation_documents_1/wfd_reports

The Commission is now carrying out the conformity and compliance analysis of all this information. This is a challenging task taking into account the huge amount of information received. Article 5 reports alone account for ca. 24 000 pages of information in 16 languages!

Conformity checking of transposition is on-going and is expected to finish in 2006.

Compliance checking of Article 3 is almost finalised and the Commission is now working on a summary report. Some of the key conclusions are:

- In some international river basin districts there is a need to strengthen the international cooperation both with EU and non-EU countries
- Some Competent Authority set-ups are complex with unclear level of coordination and attribution of responsibilities
- Assignment of groundwater to river basin district is unclear in most cases
- In general the delineation of the river basin district boundaries according to hydrological borders does not appear to be an issue

On the basis of the information in Article 3 reports, the Commission has published draft maps on European river basin districts; large rivers and lakes; and submitted rivers and lakes. They are all available in pdf format on the Europa web page:

<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/environment/water/water-framework/transposition.html>

A preliminary screening for compliance checking of Article 5 reports has started. Reports from 13 Member States have been analysed. This preliminary work is expected to finish in 2006 for the 25 Member States. First impressions indicate that there is a great variety in the content of the reports, both in quality of information provided and detail. Several reports provide good examples, in particular for some of the international river basin districts, whereas others are neither comprehensive nor complete. In many cases methodologies are different and therefore it is very difficult to extract comparable information for analysis.

According to Article 18.3 the Commission will prepare a first report on the progress of implementation of the WFD. It is intended to present this report to the public together with the WISE launch on 22 March 2007 (see above).

Environmental objectives and intercalibration

A new web page on environmental objectives and intercalibration has been published on DG Environment's Europa site:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/objectives.html>

The aim of the web page is to explain the importance of the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the intercalibration exercise. The objective of the intercalibration exercise is to harmonise the understanding of 'good ecological status' (one of the main environmental objectives of the WFD) in all Member States, and to ensure that this common understanding is consistent with the definitions in Annex V to the WFD. The work is coordinated by the European Commission Joint Research Centre in Ispra, Italy, and first results are expected in the second half of 2006. More information will be given in the next edition of the WISE Newsletter.

Eutrophication activity

The Water Directors of the EU and the Commission started an activity in 2004 under the WFD Common Implementation Strategy and the Marine Strategy, to produce guidance for the assessment of eutrophication in the context of different policies. A first version of the guidance document and a 12-page policy summary are available in WFD CIRCA:

http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/thematic_documents/13_eutrophication

The main issues addressed in the guidance document are an unified conceptual framework to understand eutrophication in all water categories, a conceptual read across EU directives (mainly Water Framework, Urban Wastewater and Nitrates Directives) and international policies (e.g. OSPAR) addressing eutrophication and a more-in-depth understanding of eutrophication in the context of WFD ecological status assessment.

Most Member States are in the process of developing new WFD compliant assessment methods. To take account of this and some other ongoing developments, the guidance document will be completed and expanded next year. Some case studies to support the findings of the document are under development as well.

The Water Directors agreed in their meeting in London in December 2005 to circulate widely the document to spread its findings and to benefit from discussions and inputs from inside and outside the WFD Common Implementation Strategy process. Any comment on the eutrophication documents can be sent to Jorge.Rodriguez-Romero@ec.europa.eu.

Workshop Reports

Monitoring networks

A two-day workshop on Monitoring Networks and Classification Systems was organised in Brussels by DG Environment on 27-28 April 2006. In accordance with the Water Framework Directive, the Monitoring Programmes for the assessment of the status of water bodies have to be operational by 22 December 2006. Therefore all Member States are now working on the design of such programmes and the objective of the workshop was to allow an exchange of information on current design practices. 80 participants from 23 Member States, Romania, Norway, Switzerland, the European Environment Agency and the European Commission attended and there were 19 presentations from 11 countries. Information about the workshop and all presentations are available to the public (see links below).

Two other workshops on River Basin Management Plans (Bonn, 8-9 May 2006) and Alien Species (Brussels, 8-9 March 2006) were also organised (see links below).

Information on these events and many more public documents are available on the WFD CIRCA library:

<http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library>
(then click "B-Public library" and the "d- other thematic areas" or "g- workshops")

Common Implementation Strategy

Meeting of Water Directors of the European Union, Candidate and EFTA Countries

The Water Directors of the European Union (EU), Candidate Countries and EFTA Countries met on 1-2 June 2006 in Salzburg (Austria) in order to discuss, in particular:

- the progress of the Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework Directive;
- the future Work Programme for the Common Implementation Strategy for the years 2007-2009;
- the developments in relation to the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and the future streamlining of reporting;
- the integration of water policy in other policy areas, in particular agriculture policy;
- the implementation and reporting aspects regarding other water directives, in particular the Urban Waste Water Treatment, and the Nitrates Directives.
- the aspects of water scarcity and climate change in relation to water policy.

In addition, the Water Directors were informed on the progress regarding the following points:

- the EU Marine Strategy;
- the EU Flood Action Programme;
- the new Daughter Directive for groundwater and the preparation for a Directive on priority substances; and
- the progress on the EU Water Initiative, in particular the components for the ECCAA and MED regions.

General progress

The Water Directors were informed of the intention to present final documents on groundwater and the document on Article 4.7 to their next meeting. In addition, the Commission informed that a study project will start on estimating the costs and benefits of the WFD implementation. A questionnaire will be sent out before summer and a kick-off workshop is planned for 27 September 2006 (separate invitations will be sent out). The Water Directors emphasised the importance of this cost-benefit study and welcomed the idea to have a more substantive debate at their next meeting, after the project has started.

Pilot river basins - Report

The Pilot River Basin Network is active in preparing a report of the activities carried out during the second phase of implementation from 2005 to 2006. The report is scheduled to be launched in March 2007 and will show a variety of issues addressed in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive.

Future activities under the CIS Work Programme 2007-2009

The Commission presented a document to reflect initial discussions on the future CIS work programme for the period 2007-2009. Two messages were highlighted. First, the success of the CIS process will be judged in relation to "improvements of implementation comparability and quality". Further efforts need to be made by all working groups and activities to translate the work of the CIS into visible results on the ground. Second, there is a clear preference for "less documents, more information exchange".

It was considered useful to differentiate the future activities. The format of a working group will be closely linked to explicit obligations in directives to develop water policy on EU level (e.g. support to Committee). In addition, other activities are based on the current priorities amongst Water Directors to address key issues and cooperate closely. These activities are identified since it provides added value to work together under the CIS umbrella on these issues.

Out of a larger number of ideas, several priority areas should be further developed in the future work programme. Issues dealt with by working groups on ecological status, groundwater, reporting and priority substances are stemming from specific formal obligations. In addition, a working group on flooding may be useful in the future, pending the outcome of the negotiation on the proposed flood directive. Until then, the current group should continue to act as an information exchange platform on the issues that were already agreed upon.

In addition to the working groups, the following priorities are considered currently the most important by the Water Directors: "WFD and Agriculture", "WFD and Hydromorphology", "environmental objectives, exemptions and related economic issues" and "chemical monitoring". Furthermore, an activity on climate change is certainly envisaged. However, before drafting a mandate for this activity, the outcome of the German conference in February 2007 should be awaited.

The Water Directors welcomed the outcome of the orientation debate and invited the respective leads and groups to develop a more detailed mandate (terms of references) on the basis of previous examples to be presented to the Strategic Coordination Group in November 2006. On the basis of this meeting, the Commission is invited to present the compiled, detailed work programme including all mandates to the next Water Directors' meeting for final discussion and endorsement.

Water Policy and EU funding instruments

In principle, many water management measures are potentially eligible under either the Rural Development programmes or the Structural and Cohesion fund operational programmes that should be adopted before the end of 2006 for the next period 2007-13. A practical manual has been developed to highlight those opportunities:

- General information on EU funding
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/intro_en.htm
- Funding handbook of DG ENV
http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/funding/pdf/handbook_funding.pdf
- Rural Development Programmes and WFD implementation:
http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/thematic_documents/wfd_agriculture&vm=detailed&sb=Title

- Structural and Cohesion Funds and water policy:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/integration/pdf/final_handbook.pdf

In practice, those opportunities can be seized only if the national governments consider them in their Rural Development National Strategies and their Structural Funds National Strategic Reference Frameworks, and subsequently in the operational programmes. The first drafts received to date show that in general MS are poorly addressing environmental measures, including water management, in their strategies. Commissioner DIMAS will use the opportunity of the next informal Environment Council (14 July 2006) to raise this issue with the EU Environment Ministers).

Priority Substances Directive

The Commission is due to adopt a new proposal in July 2006 which sets environmental quality standards for 41 types of pesticides, heavy metals and other dangerous chemical substances that have been identified as posing a particular risk to animal and plant life in the aquatic environment and to human health. The proposal will contribute to the Commission's Better Regulation initiative by replacing five older directives (listed in Annex IX of the Water Framework Directive - WFD) dealing with the chemical pollution of water, allowing their repeal.

The 41 substances or substance groups for which the proposed Directive sets concentration limits include 33 substances that the Council and Parliament have designated as 'priority substances' for EU action under the WFD (Decision 2455/2001/EC which became Annex X of the WFD) due to their widespread use and high concentrations in surface waters. A further eight substances already covered by existing legislation on dangerous substances in water are also included. A sub-set of the priority substances are also specified as 'priority hazardous substances' to which more stringent environmental objectives will apply because of their high persistence, bioaccumulation and toxicity. Member States will have to achieve the proposed limits for all priority substances by 2015 and cease discharges, emissions and losses of priority hazardous substances into water by 2025.

The Commission carefully considered the option of introducing additional control measures for priority substances in this proposal. However, the Impact Assessment demonstrated that it was not cost-effective to propose additional measures on Community level at this stage. There is already a wide range of existing or forthcoming EU measures to control emissions, such as the

Directive on integrated pollution prevention and control (IPPC), the existing directive and forthcoming Thematic Strategy on pesticides, and the REACH proposal for reforming chemicals policy. Therefore, as explained in the accompanying Communication, the proposal leaves broad scope for Member States to identify the most appropriate and cost-effective combination of measures to reduce pollution from the targeted substances.

The proposed Directive on environmental quality standards in the field of water policy is the final major piece of legislation needed to support the WFD, the cornerstone of EU water protection policy, which requires that all EU waters achieve good status by 2015. The WFD establishes a new regime for the prevention and control of chemical pollution of surface waters and ground waters. The new proposal will implement this for surface waters. In order to ensure a sound scientific basis for the proposal, it was delayed until the conclusions of the EU risk assessments for specific chemicals were available, as these were required to help determine appropriate and harmonised water quality standards.

The Commission established in March 2001 the Expert Advisory Forum on Priority Substances and Pollution Control (EAF PS). The EAF PS was intensively consulted in relation to the proposed Directive on priority substances and associated issues. The EAF PS is composed of representatives (Focal Points) from all the Member States, from the Candidate Countries and Norway. In addition, experts from all interest groups, e.g. from industry, water suppliers and environmental NGOs, are also included. In addition, the Commission consulted with the Scientific Committee on Toxicity, Ecotoxicity and the Environment. The Finnish Presidency will start the negotiations and the European Parliament will most likely hold the first reading during the last trimester of 2006. All documents and more information are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-dangersub/pri_substances.htm

Groundwater Directive

State of negotiation process

As a follow-up of the negotiation process of the new Groundwater Daughter Directive (responding to Article 17 of the WFD) mentioned in the issue 2 of the WISE Newsletter, the legislative process is now approaching its final stage. Following the adoption of the first reading report by the European Parliament on 28th April 2005, political agreement was reached at the Environment Council of 24th June 2005. The Common Position has been adopted at the European Council on the

8th December 2005, which coincided with the publication of the Commission communication on the Common Position. The file was transmitted to the European Parliament for launching the second reading which started in February 2006.

The Environment Committee of the European Parliament adopted its second reading on 25th April 2006, and this second reading report was adopted in plenary by the European Parliament on the 13th June 2006. Due to diverging positions of the European Parliament and the European Council on some issues, a conciliation procedure will take place in autumn 2006 under the Finnish presidency. Key issues for the conciliation procedure will *inter alia* be the interrelation between the Groundwater Daughter Directive and the Nitrates Directive (91/676/EEC). Another point is the application of the precautionary principle, in particular to make clear that it is not allowed to pollute the groundwater until reaching permissible standards but to take preventive measures against status deterioration.

EU Groundwater Conference

The EU Austrian Presidency organised jointly with the European Commission an EU Groundwater Conference, which was held in Vienna on 22-23 June 2006. This conference gathered more than 250 representatives of Member States environment agencies/ministries, stakeholder organisations and groundwater scientists involved in EU RTD projects. Further information on the conference is available at:

<http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/eu-grundwasser2006>

Extended abstracts of lectures and posters presented at the conference are available on the conference website at:

http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/gw_presentations

http://www.umweltbundesamt.at/en/gw_posters/

Water Policies Implementation

Bathing Water Directive

This year all EU Member States have reported, four of them for the first time: Hungary, Latvia, Malta and Poland. While compliance remains high for the 15 "old" Member States (91% for freshwater and 97% for coastal water), compliance figures for EU-25 have decreased because of the influence of the high number of areas insufficiently sampled (around 40% for coastal and for freshwaters) in Hungary, Malta and Poland. Compliance figures for EU-25 are this year 96.1 % for coastal waters (decrease of 0.6%), and 85.6 % for freshwaters (decrease of almost 4%).

Last year Member States deleted a further 103 coastal sites and 223 freshwater bathing sites from their national lists of sites that are subject to the directive's standards. The Commission has opened infringement cases against 11 Member States over the de-listing of around 7000 sites since the 1990s (see [IP/06/470](#)). The Commission is concerned that in some cases bathing sites are being de-listed to mask pollution problems and artificially improve compliance results.

Last but not least, a new Bathing Water Directive, 2006/7/EC, was adopted 15 February 2006 after a long process which started in 2002 with a Commission proposal and ended up with a Conciliation Agreement in October 2005. During the discussions in the Parliament and the Council, the main issue for debate was the severity of the health standards for the bathing sites especially the quality standards in the new category "sufficient". This category was not foreseen in the initial Commission proposal, where there were only two compliant categories: "good" and "excellent".

The deadline for the transposition of the new Bathing Water Directive is 24 March 2008. This new Directive will be implemented progressively until the current directive is repealed at the end of 2014. The essential elements of the new directive are:

- Update and simplification of parameters according to the latest scientific knowledge.
- Improved management of bathing sites.
- Improved information for the general public
- More streamlined and cost effective monitoring programmes.

The bathing water report 2006 is currently available at http://ec.europa.eu/water/water-bathing/index_en.html.

Urban Waste Water Directive

Reporting activities

The pilot version of new questionnaire was presented to the UWWTD Committee on 22 March. The comments on the reporting issues have been received from several Member States.

The issue on upcoming reporting request has been discussed at Water Directors' meeting in Salzburg in June 2006. It was indicated that a common approach to finalise questionnaire and to make more efforts on its integration into WISE is needed.

The Commission suggested that it will take some time to reflect upon the Member States comments and, in particular, to consult internally, with ESTAT, JRC and the EEA through the WISE Steering Group, on the best way forward.

The launch of new questionnaire have been postponed to the later stage in order to ensure that the questionnaire would integrate all future data needs, including those for state of environment assessments, policy effectiveness assessments and future modelling needs and that it should take full account of WISE. Once the next steps have been identified, the UWWTD experts will be consulted. The Commission will inform about progress at the next meeting of the Water Directors.

The Water Directors agreed the way forward as proposed by the Commission.

Other Water & Marine Policy developments

The Marine Strategy

Work under the European Marine Strategy is picking up speed. During the Austrian Presidency in the first half of 2006, the Council working party on environment and the European Parliament's Environment Committee have taken the file up in earnest. The Finnish Presidency announced its intention to work actively on the Marine Strategy under its Presidency in the second half of 2006.

Member States and stakeholders have taken a great interest in the marine strategy and also in how it relates to the overall development of a European maritime policy. Commission services participated in many events to present the marine strategy, and to foster dialogue and exchange of views on the strategy between parties involved, for instance in the context of the regional seas conventions to which the Community is a party.

A stakeholder conference was also held on 2 June 2006 to inform interested parties on the general state of progress of institutional discussions and discuss important issues.

As confirmed in the Green Paper Towards a future Maritime Policy for the Union (COM(2006) 275 final) published on 7 June 2006 the marine strategy will be the environmental pillar of a future maritime policy to be developed over the coming years.

Flood Risk Management

The spring has seen intensive negotiations on the proposed Floods Directive (COM(2006)15 of 18.1.2006) in the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee. The European Parliament adopted its opinion on first reading on June 13th (Rapporteur Richard Seeber, AT/PPE), and the amendments placed by the Parliament introduce closer links to the Water Framework Directive, for instance as regards the environmental aspects of flood risk management, climate change and cost recovery. It also introduces criteria for the use of existing instruments for the purpose of this Directive.

The Environment Council adopted a Political Agreement on a Common Position on the floods Directive, and has introduced more requirements for transboundary cooperation in all phases of the proposed flood risk management Directive as well as some streamlining of the preliminary flood risk assessment and flood risk maps. Second reading is expected to start late 2006/early 2007.

Links to the reports/opinion:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/flood_risk/index.htm

The Austrian Presidency also organised a floods conference on 17-18 May 2006 in Vienna, showing the importance of flood risk management and giving examples from across the European Union. *More information:*

<http://www.wassernet.at/article/articleview/42992/1/1460>

Under the Floods action programme, one stakeholder meeting was held and the Exchange circles on flood forecasting (EXCIFF) and flood mapping (EXCIMAP) made substantial progress. A workshop on land use planning in relation to floods is foreseen in the autumn.

Climate changes & water policy

At the London Water Directors meeting in November 2005, it was recognised that climate change issues could become of importance for the current and future work on implementation of water and marine policies. Key issues of discussions included climate change and water planning, forging a link between science and policy and working together with ongoing work on mitigation and adaptation. Since then, several initiatives started in the Commission related to water and climate change, focussing on freshwater and marine waters.

Within the Commission, DG Environment's Climate Change Unit leads on adaptation and mitigation. Under the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) two meetings on impacts on the water cycle and marine resources and adaptation took place on 11-12 April 2006. These two meetings were part of a series of ten sectoral meetings aiming to gather background knowledge about adaptation issues. A summary of the findings of all workshops will be available on the public part of the Circa-site in September 2006. This summary will feed the Green Paper on Impacts and Adaptation, the launching of which is planned for in November 2006.

The Science/Policy link is led by the Commission's DG Research, Joint Research Centre and DG Environment. A Marine Research-Policy workshop on "Climate Change and the European Seas" was organised by JRC, Institute for Environment & Sustainability, Ispra in Italy on 26-28 April 2006. The main issues at this workshop were:

- review climate change issues in relation to the European marine environment
- identify gaps in our current scientific and technical knowledge
- examine the implications for European Policies to address mitigation and adaptation strategies to marine climate change

A Freshwater Research-Policy workshop on "Climate change impacts on the water cycle, resources and quality – Research-Policy interface" is scheduled for 25-26 September 2006 in Brussels. This workshop aims to obtain an overview of the key policy challenges of climate change impacts on water management, to review the key results of on-going or completed EU (FP5 and FP6) projects on climate change and water and to identify the related research challenges. It aims to explore whether the current scientific outcomes are sufficiently mature to be taken on board in policy development, as well as the key research topics that would need to be addressed at the European level in the future.

Both workshops and the Green Paper on Impacts and Adaptation will provide input for the Symposium on Climate Changes Impacts and the Water Dimension, which will take place on 12-14 February 2007 in Berlin (jointly organised by the German EU-Presidency and the European Commission). Further information on this conference will be provided in the next issue of the WISE Newsletter.

Science-policy integration

Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development

A series of new research projects of direct relevance to water and marine policies is currently under negotiation as the result of the last call of proposals of the 6th Framework Programme (FP6). In addition, the preparation of the 7th Framework Programme (FP7) work programme is being actively discussed with the aim of setting up priorities for the first call of proposals (2007). Further information on FP6 selected projects and on FP7 research priorities relevant to water policies will be provided in the December 2006 issue of the WISE Newsletter.

Short reports on the outcome of SSP (Scientific Support to Policies) projects in support of the WFD implementation will be included in the forthcoming issue of the WISE Newsletter, in particular the projects of the first train (started in 2003), namely the REBECCA (ecological status vs chemical status) and SWIFT-WFD (screening methods in support of WFD) projects which will be terminated at the end of 2006.

LIFE

The **Best LIFE-Environment projects** completed during 2005 and early 2006 - which represent the most recent successful projects in terms of: their contribution to immediate and long-term environmental, economic and social improvements; their degree of innovation and transferability; their relevance to policy; and their cost-effectiveness – have been selected by the EU Member States represented on the LIFE-Committee on the 15th May 2006, according to a set of best practice criteria.

On the occasion of the Committee meeting, five projects were given the '**Best of the Best**' award. They included two projects addressing water management issues: the Danish project "OSIS", which demonstrated the viability of a permanently mounted sensor system for identifying oil discharges from offshore installations within North Sea areas designated as "special areas" by the International Maritime Organisation (www.osis.biz) and the Dutch "DOC" project (www.dockaas.nl), which developed a water self-sufficient dairy industry by closing the internal water circulation loop, thus decreasing the amount of waste water by 50% and guaranteeing zero use of ground water. For more information on the subject, please refer to the LIFE website under the News section:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/news/lifeflash/index.htm>

In addition, the selection procedure arising from the last **call for proposals** under the present LIFE III programme has now reached its conclusion. The European Commission will proceed in **co-financing 50 new LIFE-Environment projects**. As one of the priority areas is dedicated to projects which face the current challenges in the field of the European water policy, 14 of the selected projects are directly dealing with water management issues: addressing flood prevention (2), waste water management (6), the impact of agricultural activities on water quality (3) and other water-related issues (3).

Finally, the next call for proposals will fall under the **LIFE + programme**. The probable budget for the seven year period will be around €2.098 million and will be allocated between the Member States on the basis of established criteria (population 50%, population density 5%, SCI coverage 25% and relative SCI coverage 20%). LIFE + will have the following structure and will be made of three components:

- **Nature and biodiversity** (aimed at the implementation of the birds and habitats directives);
- **Environmental policy and governance** (concentrates on the other three 6th EAP priorities: climate change, health/quality of life and natural resources and waste);
- **Information and communication** (Dissemination of information and raising of awareness; accompanying measures including those related to **forest fire prevention**).

The bulk of the available funds in LIFE+ (at least 80%) will be implemented in the form of **delegated management**, whereas the balance will be controlled centrally by the **Commission**. The Commission will provide a **multi-annual framework programme (MAP)** within which the member states will define their own **national annual work programmes (NAWP)**, which form the basis for the selection of relevant projects.

In the future, with LIFE+, projects concerning the European Water Policy will most certainly be funded; however, each Member State will have to determine its precise priorities and specific areas of intervention in the national annual work programme (NAWP).

For more information on LIFE+, please refer to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/news/futureoflife.htm>

News Alert Service: Science for Environment Policy

A new service has been launched by DG Environment, the "Science for Environment Policy News Alert Service", to improve the dissemination of research results so that they are both more usable for policy makers and help to communicate understanding of environmental issues to the general public. The aim of the service is to reinforce the links between science and policy. It provides scientific information in the field of the main themes of the Environmental Action Programme, including water and marine policies. The news alert is sent weekly. Last week's articles can be consulted on the News website at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/integration/research_alert_en.htm

Subscription may be obtained free of charge by contacting BIO Intelligence Service at: science-env-policy@biois.com.

Forthcoming conferences in 2007

Three major international conferences involving the DG Environment Water & Marine unit are planned during the first trimester of 2007, namely on Climate Change (February), Status Monitoring (March, see www.WFDLille2007.org) and WISE (March, see information in page 3).

Forthcoming meetings (second half of 2006)¹

- ✓ **Climate Change & Water Cycle joint RTD-JRC-ENV Workshop, Brussels, 25-26/09/06**
- ✓ Working Group Groundwater (WG C), Lisbon, 2/10/06
- ✓ Expert Advisory Forum on Priority Substances, Brussels, 2/10/06
- ✓ CIS Strategic Coordination Group, Brussels, 5/10/06 and 8-9/11/06
- ✓ Water Directors meeting, 30/11-1/12/06, Inari, Finland

Conferences in 2007

- ✓ **Int. Symposium on Climate Change Impacts and the Water Dimension, Berlin, 12-14/02/07**
- ✓ **Int. Conference on Water Status Monitoring under the WFD, Lille, 12-14/03/07**
- ✓ **European Water Conference – WISE Public Launch, Brussels, 22-23/03/07**

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¹ Only meetings marked in red are open to external participation