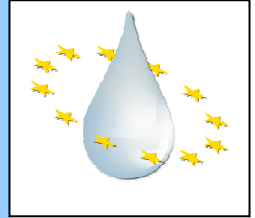


# WISE Newsletter

## The bulletin of the Water Information System for Europe

Issue n°2 - December 2005



## FOREWORD

I am delighted to say that the first edition of the WISE newsletter has reached a wide readership not only in policy circles but also in stakeholder organisations. This is encouraging and shows that we should pursue our communication efforts to improve common understanding on water and marine policy issues and related technical and scientific activities.

The dramatic water situation across Europe, in particular the increasing frequency of floods and droughts, highlights the need to improve coordination and strengthen exchanges in the interest of better integrating not only policies but also knowledge-based strategies. The informal consultation approach and expert groups operated under the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) of the WFD since 2001 have shown the benefits of exchanging views on implementation challenges and sharing common understanding and practices. In terms of European governance this illustrates that policies should not only be seen as a constraint but can lead to building a strong partnership among the Member States and the European institutions to tackle a common challenges: the protection of water and marine environments.

The informal meeting of Water Directors of the European Union, candidate and EFTA countries held in London on 28/29 November has examined some of the key issues that we have to tackle together. These include the integration of water considerations into other policy areas, in particular agricultural policy, cohesion policy and hydromorphological alterations (including hydropower and navigation). Other issues are climate change and water, and the future streamlining of reporting of all EU water policy. Water Directors were also informed about ongoing policy developments, in particular the EU Marine Strategy, the EU Flood Action Programme, the new Bathing Water Directive, the new Daughter Groundwater Directive and the preparation of the future directive on priority substances. Finally, information was provided on the state of play of implementation of other water directives, including the Urban Waste Water

Treatment, Nitrates, Drinking Water and Bathing Water Directives.

2006 will be a challenging year for water and marine policies with the likely adoption of a set of new directives, important implementation milestones (e.g. design of the WFD monitoring programmes), and related developments (e.g. WISE implementation). More than ever, Member States cooperation and coordination efforts will be required to ensure progress of our policies.

This second issue of the WISE Newsletter covers developments in water and marine policies occurred during the second semester of 2006.

At the end of 2005, I will be transferring to other duties inside the Commission. I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to all those working on the development and implementation of EU water policy for their commitment, energy and talent. The co-operative spirit among all stakeholders is truly exemplary and I feel privileged to have been part of the water family for the past five years. I am sure that my successor, Peter Gammeltoft, will have lots of fun and great satisfaction in working on the "European Water Project".

My best wishes for the future.

*Patrick MURPHY*

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.

**This Newsletter replaces and complements the former "WFD Newsletter"**

For further information about the activities of the Environment General-Directorate, visit the site: <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water>

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***The Water & Marine Unit of DG ENV wishes you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and successful New Year!***

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***The Water & Marine unit says goodbye to Adrienne Van der Sar and warmly thanks her for her leadership of the Flood Action Programme now developing into a new flood directive proposal.***

***The unit also thanks Patrick Murphy for his rather helpful guidance and contributions to all the sensitive dossiers developed over the last four years. He has been instrumental in all the achievements that we see today in the water and marine policy sectors.***

***Finally, the unit congratulates and thanks stagiaires for their efficient contributions to policy activities, namely Goncalo Viegas (Marine Strategy), Jinlong Guo and Qiuchi shi (WFD Team)***

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

**Legal notice**

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## **Water Framework Directive**

### **State of Implementation**

The WFD scoreboard has been updated to reflect the last submissions by Member States:

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

All Article 3 and Article 5 reports have been made publicly available through the WFD CIRCA:

[http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework\\_directive/implementation\\_documents\\_1/wfd\\_reports](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. More information will be given in next WISE Newsletter issue.

### **Common Implementation Strategy**

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

The Water Directors met on 28-29 November 2005 in London. Amongst the main points were:

- **Progress of the WFD Common Implementation Strategy:** The general progresses are in line with the work programme 2005-2006. First practical documents were endorsed, namely:
  - Improving the Communication of the Intercalibration exercise,
  - WFD key research issues,
  - 2007 monitoring reporting guidance.

The WISE-WFD prototype for 2005 reporting is ready and a WISE User Workshop has been organised for 15/16 December 2005. Furthermore, the Water Directors decided to launch a new specific activity on exemptions to the WFD environmental objectives, with an initial focus on new modifications (article 4.7).

- **Integration of water policy in other policy areas:** A new activity on hydro-morphological alterations was agreed by the Water Directors, with an initial focus on navigation, hydropower and flood defence.

A practical manual highlighting EU funding opportunities for Water Policy is under development and will be available soon.

- **Climate change and water policy:** The Water Directors recognised that climate change can become a significant issue for Water Policy. A Conference on Water and Climate Change will be held under the German Presidency in the first half of 2007 and the third conference on climate and water in Helsinki in the second half of 2007.

- **Other points:** The Water Directors were also informed about the progress regarding:
  - The EU Marine Strategy,
  - The EU Flood Action Programme,
  - The new Bathing Water Directive, the New Daughter Directive for groundwater and the preparation of a Directive on priority substances, and
  - The state of play regarding other water directives including the Urban Waste Water Treatment, Nitrates, Drinking Water and Bathing Water Directives.

Other information items concerned the progress of several activities, e.g. the Chemical Monitoring Activity and science-policy integration (WISE-RTD) which are described in this issue. GIS expert group progress was also presented, for which further information will be provided in the issue n°3 of the WISE Newsletter.

#### **Chemical Monitoring Activity**

The effectiveness of the WFD chemical monitoring programmes will depend largely on the ability of Member States laboratories to measure the chemical status of Community waters and detect status changes. Measurement data will, therefore, represent the foundation of the water quality evaluation system, on the basis of which decisions will be taken on the programme of measures required to achieve WFD environmental objectives. More specifically, a large part of compliance requirements for good chemical status of both surface and ground water bodies is based on chemical monitoring data. This means in turn that the legal basis of the overall directive will be primarily linked to reporting of data, which should be of demonstrated and comparable quality throughout the EU. Sufficient knowledge exists to be able to expect with confidence that high quality data can be obtained. To date, the knowledge available has often been tailor-made for specific monitoring needs (e.g. marine monitoring, river conventions etc.). For surface waters the work of an expert group launched under the Common Implementation Strategy, namely the Analysis and Monitoring of Priority Substances (AMPS) expert group, has highlighted that specific guidelines would be highly desirable to support WFD implementation, and in particular its legal compliance regime.

For these purposes a new activity has been launched under the CIS, bringing together experts on surface and ground water monitoring in order to ensure a coherent view and to avoid duplication of efforts on issues of joint concern. Key issues include monitoring design and strategies in relation to checking compliance with good chemical status, as they should be applied to the different types of media covered by the WFD (i.e.

surface waters including inland (rivers, lakes), transitional, coastal and territorial waters and other marine waters under the jurisdiction of the Member States, ground waters, sediments, suspended matters and biota), as well as aspects of quality assurance.

The starting point for the Chemical Monitoring Activity (CMA) is the following:

- the existing requirements of the Water Framework Directive,
- the proposed “daughter Directive” on ground water (expected to be adopted before the end of 2006),
- the future proposal on priority substances,
- the work of the European Marine Monitoring and Assessment (EMMA) working group under the EU Marine Strategy (and in this respect in particular the work already carried out within ICES, HELCOM and OSPAR), and
- the work carried out in different working groups and expert groups of the Common Implementation Strategy (CIS) of the WFD, in particular the guidance document on monitoring (CIS Guidance N°7).

For surface water, specific discussions have taken place in the framework of the AMPS expert group with regard to monitoring of priority substances, suspended particulate matter, sediments and biota. To avoid overlapping work and to ensure coherence between WFD and chemical monitoring in the framework of the Marine Strategy, the activities of EMMA will form an integral part of this work. For ground water, the work of CIS Working Group C, as far as chemical monitoring is concerned, will be fully included in the CMA activities. Specific monitoring guidance already developed by international or national organisations, and research-related activities (e.g. projects funded under the ‘Scientific Support to Policies’ (SSP) priority of the 6th RTD Framework Programme) are being taken into account. Examples are the SWIFT-WFD project, the NORMAN project and the newly started EAQC-WISE project (see science-policy integration section in this newsletter).

The objectives of the **Chemical Monitoring Activity** are the following:

1. **Collect the existing information** from the WFD Common Implementation Strategy process and best practices from other bodies (e.g. marine conventions, river conventions, research projects etc.) regarding chemical monitoring.
2. **Exchange information on existing best practices** among member states.
3. **Develop non-legally binding technical guidance and/or technical specifications** on chemical monitoring on specific issues not

yet sufficiently developed in previous work and that would merit an EU-wide approach.

4. **Develop legally binding requirements on the performance of analytical methods** e.g. in the form of a Commission decision, to ensure that quality assurance/control principles established under existing standards (e.g. ISO 17025) will be mandatory within the WFD monitoring framework.
5. **Assess and develop the coordination** needed at EU level with respect to quality assurance of WFD monitoring programmes to ensure that monitoring data will be comparable from one river basin district to another.

Three drafting groups have been established under the activity. Group leaders will put forward proposals for discussion and comments to the respective groups. Most of the work relies on email consultations and exchange of drafts steered by the leaders, with drafts submitted for comments to the group members and discussed at regular workshops. The three groups are:

- **Surface/Marine water group** focusing on technical specifications for inland and marine water monitoring (chaired by DE, co-chaired by JRC-IES). It is composed of Member State experts, CEN representatives, and representatives of related RTD projects (in particular SWIFT-WFD, EAQC-WISE and NORMAN)
- **Groundwater group** focusing solely on technical groundwater monitoring issues (chaired by AT, co-chaired by UK). Like the surface/marine group, it involves Member State experts, stakeholder organisations and representatives of the scientific community.
- **QA/QC group** developing a cross-cutting document on performance criteria for methods. It is chaired by DG Environment and involves a core set of organisations such as the JRC-IES, the JRC Institute for Reference Materials and Measurements and CEN. The document will be reviewed by the above groups prior to submission (and adoption) by the WFD Regulatory Committee.

The activity was officially launched on 11<sup>th</sup> April 2005, and outlines of the respective guidance contents were discussed in *ad hoc* workshops on 12<sup>th</sup> October (groundwater), 17<sup>th</sup> November (surface/marine water) and 5<sup>th</sup> December (QA/QC). The CMA will be developed during the first semester of 2006, with the aim to make final drafts available for submission to the Member States through the WFD Common Implementation Strategy before autumn 2006 so that the guidance documents may be adopted before the operational start of the WFD monitoring programmes.

## **Water Policy and EU funding instruments**

Under the WFD Common Implementation Strategy, a specific activity targeted to the opportunities of financing Water Policy through existing EU funding instruments is being carried out.

### **Water and Rural development programmes**

Under the "WFD and agriculture" activity, a specific report on Rural Development programmes and WFD was endorsed. This document highlights the opportunities for closer implementation processes between the 2 policies. It is now available on:

[http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework\\_directive/thematic\\_documents/wfd\\_agriculture&vm=detailed&sb=Title](http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/thematic_documents/wfd_agriculture&vm=detailed&sb=Title)

The main findings of this document are the following:

- The current programming period (2000-2006) has shown that Rural Development measures can have positive impacts on water resources and these experiences should be transferred in the design of the upcoming Rural Development programme (2007-2013),
- Examination of small scale case studies gave an indication of the success factors that need to be implemented jointly,
- Regarding the limited budgets and the other competing priorities, synergies between the different environmental policies (e.g. water, biodiversity, climate change, soil...) should be sought.

The report also highlighted the need to enhance co-operation between Rural Development and water competent authorities and stakeholders when drafting national strategies and programmes for Rural Development and when designing the river basin management plans.

### **Water Policy and Structural and Cohesion funds (SCF)**

A practical handbook is being drafted by experts of MS environmental authorities and the Commission (DG ENV, DG REGIO) and should be available at the beginning of 2006. It is targeted to any practitioners of both water and regional development policies. With many illustrative case studies, it aims to set out basic principles and common understandings between the two policies. Therefore, it could be used by the Member States as a reference tool for developing water policy support by the SCF for 2007-2013).

## **Groundwater Directive**

As indicated in the first issue of this newsletter, the first reading report was adopted by the European Parliament on 28<sup>th</sup> April 2005, which

was followed by a political agreement reached at the Environment Council of 24<sup>th</sup> June. The Common Position was adopted at Council on 8<sup>th</sup> December, which coincided with the publication of the Commission communication on the Common Position. The file will be transmitted to the European Parliament for launching the second reading, which is planned to start on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2006.

## **Water Policies Implementation**

### **Urban Waste Water Directive**

#### **Implementation**

- Due to the serious delays in implementation of the Directive, the number of ongoing infringement cases (47 cases in total for UWWTD for EU-15) has not changed since the last reporting to the Water Directors. Several cases have been taken forward and some single cases have been merged into the horizontal ones. During the second half of 2005 technical meetings have been held with Belgium, France, UK and Portugal.
- All new member states provided reports for Art.17 on the Implementation programmes. Unfortunately some programmes are not complete or entirely clear. Bilateral contacts to clarify them are under way.

#### **UWWTD Committee, reporting activities and the workshops**

- The **joint workshop** on reporting on WFD and UWWTD took place on 20-21 October 2005. The main objectives were:
  - a) to start discussions on the integration of all reporting on water, beginning with discussion of UWWTD integration into WISE, and
  - b) to present the summary paper on clarification of certain terms and definitions of the Directive in relation to the reporting for UWWTD.

The summary paper presented is the draft of the Commission paper drawn upon on the basis of guidance documents elaborated by the working group on reporting for UWWTD. The summary paper was drafted in co-operation with the legal advisors. The following **open issues** remain after the discussions within the working group:

- a) definitions of agglomeration and big city
- b) term of a nominal load/generated load
- c) individual and appropriate collecting systems (IAS) and treatment standards
- d) definitions of total served load , total

- connected load, organic design capacity
  - e) industrial WWTP treating urban waste water
  - f) measurement of incoming load
- The Commission is reviewing the comments sent by 12 member states on the summary paper. The updated version will be discussed during the UWWTD **Committee (Art. 18) meeting in 15 December 2005**. The main issues to be presented for information at the Committee are:
  - a) the updated version of the summary paper on clarification of certain terms and definitions of the Directive in relation to reporting;
  - b) the roadmap for the new reporting cycle with an explanation of the new data request.
- The Commission, in the framework of the discussions in the working group on reporting, is intending to launch a **new reporting request by mid 2006**. The new questionnaire will be drawn up on the basis of the discussions held in the working group on reporting during 2004-2005. The draft of the final questionnaire under reporting for Art.15(4) will be presented during the **working group or Committee meeting foreseen for April 2006**. The Commission is considering placing the reports under Art.17 (Implementation plans) and Art.16 (Situation reports) in the UWWTD database.
- The Commission is working on the **WISE implementation plan** and clarifying the possibilities for integrating UWWTD reporting into WISE. As indicated at the Water Directors meeting in Luxembourg, a single reporting system for UWWTD and its integration into WISE remains one of the tasks for 2006-2007 for the Commission and other stakeholders.
- Commission is organising a **series of workshops** to support new member states and candidate countries and to clarify certain challenges the old member states are facing. Workshops have been held in Hungary and in Italy during the second half of 2005. The presentation for Romania to clarify the requirements of the Directive took place on 8 December in Brussels. It revealed that the bilateral discussions helped to identify specific challenges that a Member State is facing and to clarify certain implementation issues. The follow-up action meeting with Italian authorities was held on 15<sup>th</sup> November 2005.
- In **2006** the workshops in Spain, Poland and some other selected new member states and acceding countries are planned.

### **Priority tasks on the UWWTD activities for the Commission in 2006-2007**

- the adoption and publication of the 4<sup>th</sup> Commission synthesis report on the status of implementation
- enforcement of the Directive at the EU level
- development of a single coherent reporting system for the Directive
- integration of the extended single reporting system into WISE

**EEA report on «Effectiveness of waste water policies in selected countries – EEA pilot study»:** The analysis of the water quality situation, water policy objectives, institutional context, policy instruments and observations on effectiveness for six MS had been done and described in a unified way. The report highlights the differences between MS according to: (a) the size of the MS, (b) policy and setting of the priorities, (c) organisational and institutional system, and (d) management of water policies within the MS.

The study is an important contribution to understanding

- a) the *effects of environmental measures* to be implemented according to the requirements of the directive,
- b) the *effectiveness of an environmental measure* for the environment,
- c) the *cost-effectiveness (cost-benefit) of an environmental measure*
- **The report can be downloaded from the website:**  
[http://org.eea.eu.int/documents/newsreleases/urban\\_wastewater-en](http://org.eea.eu.int/documents/newsreleases/urban_wastewater-en)

### **Bathing Water Directive**

The Bathing Water Report 2005 is now available. The major change this year is that 6 “new” Member States reported for the first time (CY, CZ, EE, LT, SK and SI). MT and PL submitted partial data that could only be summarised. HU and LV did not submit any data. While compliance remains high for the sites reported by the former 15 Member States, the situation is different for the new ones, with low compliance rates (20-90%), and insufficiently sampled sites (up to 43 %). CY and SI had the best results, achieving close to 90% compliance in coastal waters.

A technical workshop on reporting obligations under the Bathing Water Directive took place on 26 October 2005. It was mainly addressed to the “new” Member States in order to deal with the most relevant items linked to the reporting exercise, and also to resolve uncertainties. Representatives from all the new MS attended the meeting, except Latvia. Several representatives from “old” member States also attended. MS

representatives showed a very pro-active approach and also appreciated the Commission's initiative. It is expected that this workshop will facilitate the new Member States' future reporting exercises.

The Commission has noticed that Member States frequently de-list bathing sites. The accumulated percentages (over several years and up to 2004) are currently above 30% in several Member States. As regards prohibitions, there are huge differences amongst Member States, reaching, in one case, more than 30% of prohibitions. The Commission intends to address the above-mentioned issues, since they might go against the letter of Directive 76/160/EEC: as regards **de-listing**, it is the Member States' responsibility to report on all bathing sites (including de facto bathing sites), and to justify why certain bathing sites have to be considered for de-listing. Prohibition should only be used in case of bad quality of bathing sites and in **order to protect bathers' health**. If bathing is prohibited, steps should be taken to address the source of pollution and restore the site to good quality. It is not acceptable that sites retain the status "bathing prohibited" for many years without remedial measures.

Last but not least, on 12<sup>th</sup> October the Council and the European Parliament succeeded in reaching agreement in the Conciliation Committee on the revision of the bathing water directive. The agreement will allow for rapid adoption of the new directive. The issues settled by conciliation concerned, in particular:

*Public information and participation:* ensuring public participation in the implementation of the Directive, and facilitating Internet publication of the monitoring results

*Standards and viruses:* For the "sufficient" category, the values of the parameter for "intestinal enterococci" become 330 for inland waters and 185 for coastal waters, based on a 90 percentile evaluation.

*Epidemiological studies, including viruses:* The Commission shall submit its report by 2008, Member States shall, by the end of 2014, submit written observations on the report in view of the Commission review of the directive; the Commission shall then verify whether it would be appropriate to modify the standards or to phase out the "sufficient" classification;

Agreement had already been reached on a number of amendments to the common position, for instance:

- bringing forward by one year the deadlines for implementation of the Directive and for the establishment of bathing water profiles;

- setting 2020 as the deadline for the Commission's review of the Directive.

### ***Drinking Water Directive (DWD)***

The Standing Committee of the Drinking Water Directive decided in January 2005 to set up a subgroup for drafting reporting guidelines for the DWD. This subgroup met 5 times and will present its proposal to the DWD Standing Committee on 19 December 2005.

Showing its commitment to standardised reporting and to the WISE approach, the Subgroup has designed a new table-oriented type of reporting, bringing harmonised data transfer and processing within reach.

One of the base principles is that reporting is kept as simple as possible and that it should be reduced to the minimum necessary to demonstrate compliance with the DWD.

The proposed reporting guidelines also standardise the reporting process on derogations, which was done in an ad-hoc format up to now. Information on derogations will integrate into the drinking water quality reporting in a WISE spirit.

In line with the Aarhus Convention, a lot of attention is given to information for the public made available both by the Member States and by the Commission.

A new DW site will be available from 1 Jan 06 on:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/water-drink/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/water-drink/index_en.html) .

## ***Water & Marine Policy development***

### ***The Marine Strategy***

On 24 October 2005, the Commission proposed an ambitious strategy to protect Europe's marine environment. The Thematic Strategy on the Protection and Conservation of the Marine Environment aims to ensure that all EU marine waters are environmentally healthy by 2021. This will protect this precious asset, which is the resource base upon which marine-related economic and social activities depend.

The marine strategy is one of the seven Thematic Strategies required under the 6th Environmental Action programme, which runs from 2002 to 2012. It will be a key component of the future Maritime Policy which will be proposed by the Commission in 2006.

Launching the Strategy, Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "Europe's seas and oceans make a huge contribution to our quality of life and our economic prosperity, but they are deteriorating because of over-exploitation, pollution, climate change and a range of other factors. This is an area where there is a strong need for a European overarching and integrated approach. We want to ensure that European citizens today and in the future are able to benefit from seas and oceans that are safe, clean, healthy and rich in nature".

Today we are witnessing a considerable loss of marine biodiversity due to contamination by dangerous substances, excess nutrients, the impact of commercial fishing or effects of climate change – to name just a few threats. The evidence of the deterioration of the marine environment continues to accumulate, pointing to potentially irreversible changes – as illustrated by the poor state of certain fish stocks in Europe or the effects of eutrophication on the marine ecology of the Baltic Sea. The current deterioration of the marine environment jeopardises the generation of wealth and employment opportunities derived from Europe's oceans and seas, e.g. fisheries and tourism.

To turn this situation around the Commission has developed an integrated policy framework to help deal with the pressures and negative impacts on the marine environment. It lays down clear and operational guidelines on how to achieve good environmental status for all of the EU's marine areas by 2021. The strategy is set out in a Communication, accompanied by a proposal for a Directive.

The analysis underpinning the development of the strategy is contained in an accompanying Impact Assessment. The strategy will build upon what has been achieved so far at all levels of governance to protect Europe's seas.

#### *Marine regions*

EU Member States share responsibility for a number of different marine areas, each of which has its own distinctive environmental characteristics (the Baltic Sea, the North-East Atlantic, the Mediterranean). To take account of regional differences the Commission proposal sets out common objectives and methods, but these are to be implemented at the level of marine regions. This means that the Member States sharing a marine area will be responsible for working in close cooperation to develop plans designed to ensure good environmental status in their respective marine waters. These plans are to include a detailed assessment of the state of the environment, defining what achieving good environmental status means in the context of each

regional sea. They will also contain clear environmental targets and monitoring programmes. No specific management measures will be set down at EU level, but plans must be checked and approved by the Commission.

EU Member States share marine areas with non EU countries and an important part of achieving good environmental status will involve close co-operation with these third countries. Member States will be encouraged to work within the framework of existing regional seas conventions<sup>1</sup> which have extensive expertise in protecting the marine environment.

Each Member State will draw up a programme of cost-effective measures aimed at delivering good environmental status of the marine environment. Impact assessments, including detailed cost-benefit analyses of the measures proposed, will be required prior to the introduction of any new measure. The national programmes will need approval by the Commission.

#### *Thematic Strategies*

Thematic strategies represent a modern way of decision-making. They are based on extensive research and consultation with stakeholders, address the issues in a holistic way that take into account links with other problems and policy areas, and promote Better Regulation.

The other Strategies will cover air pollution, waste prevention and recycling, sustainable use of resources, soils, pesticides and the urban environment. The air pollution Strategy was presented on 21 September 2005 and the others will follow.

The full Marine Strategy as well as more information on its development are available at:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/marine.htm>

#### **Flood Risk Management**

The EEA report «The European Environment – State and Outlook 2005» reconfirms that in general northern Europe is likely to become more flood prone and southern Europe more drought prone as the extra energy in the climate system increases the probability of extremes – including severe storms and floods, such as those witnessed in central Europe in recent years. The report also finds that urban areas continue to grow, with effects like removal of woodland cover

<sup>1</sup> Such as the OSPAR Convention (North Sea and North Atlantic), the HELCOM Convention (Baltic Sea), the Barcelona Convention (the Mediterranean)

that can radically alter rainwater run-off, provoking mudslides and other problems while increasing the areas at risk from flooding. Many remaining wetlands have also been lost to coastal developments, mountain reservoirs and river engineering works. These findings reinforce the importance of improving integrated flood risk management in Europe and to continue to implement the Action Programme on Flood Risk management at EU level.

The main progress over the second semester of 2005 was the Internet consultation on the forthcoming proposal for a directive on Flood Risk Management. The results of this consultation, which concluded on 14 September, are available on the DG Environment's public website<sup>2</sup>. The consultation as well as the three stakeholder meetings (the latest held in September) showed a strong support for a legal instrument and reinforcing close links with the Water Framework Directive.

Work to prepare Commission's adoption of the proposal for a directive is progressing. At present, formal consultation of other Commission Directorates Generals is taking place. If successfully concluded, the next steps will be translation of the proposal into all 20 EU languages, and then hopefully adoption by the Commissioners in the first quarter of 2006. Thereafter the European Parliament and the Council will discuss the proposal, a procedure that takes on average 2 years before the text is finalised and becomes EU law.

The spring of 2006 will see continued work in the stakeholder forum on Flood-related research and EU funding instruments, and on 18-19 May the Austrian Presidency of the EU will hold a Floods conference to emphasise the importance of the legislative proposal on floods.

## **International Activities**

### **EU Water Initiative (EUWI)**

The annual meeting organised in August in Stockholm during the World Water week provided a framework for discussion and consultation with a broad group of water-sector and development co-operation interests on the design and implementation of the EUWI. While presenting the progress made so far, emphasis was put on the way forward and key recommendations pointed out the need for:

- raising the political profile of the EUWI;
- strengthening stakeholders involvement;
- a greater emphasis on measurable outputs;
- a strategy to improve Communication.

These recommendations were discussed during the EUWI Steering group on 11 October and a revised version of the EUWI Strategy will be finalised in January 2006. General information and latest developments of the EUWI are available at: [www.euwi.net](http://www.euwi.net)

### **EUWI / WFD Joint Process**

The Mediterranean EUWI / WFD Joint Process, endorsed by the Water Directors in Amsterdam in December 2004, was presented to the Euro-Mediterranean Conference of Water Directors, held in Rome on 24-25 November 2005. Euro-Mediterranean Water directors proposed that the Conference serve as an institutional support for the implementation of the EUWI in the region and EMWIS (Euro-Mediterranean Information System on the know-how in the Water sector) as a technical platform for the Mediterranean Joint Process. Information on this meeting is available at:

<http://www.emwis.org/documents/html/roma'05.htm>

## **Science-policy integration**

### **Research in support of water policies**

**6th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development:** Following the evaluation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> call for proposals of the "Global Change and Ecosystems" thematic priority (FP6-2004-Global-3) two water-relevant Integrated Projects (IP) with an EC contribution of €28 million and seven Specific Targeted Research Projects (STREPS) with an EC contribution of €17,8 million, have been selected for funding.

The first IP project "*TECHNEAU: Technology enabled universal access to safe water*" challenges the ability of traditional systems and technology solutions for drinking water supply to cope with present and future global threats and opportunities. It therefore aims to rethink the current drinking water supply options and demonstrate new and improved technologies for the whole water supply chain. The second IP "*SWITCH: Sustainable Water Management Improves Tomorrow's Cities' Health*" deals with the existing limitations, un-sustainability factors and risks of conventional urban water management. It aims to develop tested scientific, technological and socio-economic solutions.

The STREPS projects are dealing with the

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<sup>2</sup> see

[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/flood\\_risk/consult.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/water/flood_risk/consult.htm)

development of innovative technologies for alternative water sources: *"RECLAIM WATER-Water reclamation technologies for safe artificial groundwater recharge"* and *"GABARDINE-Groundwater artificial recharge based on alternative sources of water: advanced integrated technologies and management"*; the development of the membrane bioreactor technology: *"AMADEUS-Accelerate membrane development for urban sewage purification"* and *"EUROMBRA-Membrane bioreactor technology"*; municipal sewage sludge treatment, disposal and re-use: *"SUSAN- Sustainable and Safe Re-use of Municipal Sewage Sludge for Nutrient Recovery"* and *"REMOVALS-Reduction, modification and valorisation of sludge"*; integrated water resources management case studies in twinned catchments/river basins from Europe and from developing countries: *"TWINLATIN-Twinning European and Latin-American River Basins for Research Enabling Sustainable Water Resources Management"*

In addition to the above-mentioned STREPS, three environmental technologies related projects (EC contribution of €5 million) have been supported in the 3<sup>rd</sup> call: *"PROMOTE - Efficiency control and performance verification of improved approaches for soil-groundwater protection and rehabilitation"*, *"TESTNET-Towards European Sectorial Testing Networks for Environmental Technologies"* and *"NORMAN-Network of reference laboratories and related organisations for monitoring and bio-monitoring of emerging environmental pollutants"*

The 4<sup>th</sup> call for proposals in the area "Global Change and Ecosystems" with a total indicative budget of €205 million closed on 3 November 2005 (closure date 26 March 2006 for 2<sup>nd</sup> stage IPs proposals). Full details of the call, including the work programme, detailed task descriptions and the guide for proposers, are available on CORDIS at:

[http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call\\_id=211](http://fp6.cordis.lu/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP6DetailsCallPage&call_id=211)

Evaluation results for STREPS, CA (Concerted Actions) and SSA (Specific Support Actions) are expected to be available in the beginning of 2006.

New RTD projects in support to water policies have been selected within the 4<sup>th</sup> call for proposals of the Scientific Support to Policies (SSP) priority, e.g. the *EAQC-WISE* project (*European Analytical Quality Control in support of WISE*) which is directly linked to the on-going Chemical Monitoring Activity developed under the WFD common implementation strategy. The 5<sup>th</sup> SSP call was published on 22<sup>nd</sup> December and included two further topics supporting water

policies. More details on on-going RTD projects will be published in the next issue of the newsletter.

### **Water Supply and Sanitation Technology**

**Platform:** The Water Supply and Sanitation Technology Platform (WSSTP) is one of the European Technology Platforms established under the European Environment Technologies Action Plan (ETAP). Technology Platforms aim to strengthen the links between research and industry, as well as Europe's position as a technologically innovative economy. They also have the potential to contribute to a major increase in private investment in R&D. They can thus make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives set at the Barcelona European Council of increasing investment in research to approaching 3% of GDP by 2010, with two-thirds of the new investment coming from the private sector.

The WSSTP was formed in October 2004. It is open to all stakeholders involved in European water supply and sanitation and major end-user groups, i.e., research community, industry, policy makers, financial community, consumers, etc. Its objectives are to (1) face up to the global challenge of ensuring safe and secure water supply for different uses and sanitation services through the development of sustainable technologies within the framework of integrated management of the available water resources; (2) promote step changes in the technological capacity of the European water industry, with the aim of supporting and strengthening its competitiveness in the world market; and (3) to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals.

The mission of WSSTP is to produce a Vision Document for the whole European water industry together with a Strategic Research Agenda and an Implementation Plan for the short (2010), medium (2020) and long-term (2030). This will provide an input to the European Commission's preparation of the 7th Research Framework Programme.

The Vision Document was conceived and drafted by five working groups, consisting of water sector experts and representatives of water sector stakeholders. The vision paints a picture of what could be achieved by 2030 if resources for research and development were made available and targeted to respond to the issues and challenges facing the European water sector. The vision identifies high-level research needs, which are developed in more detail in the Strategic Research Agenda.

These documents identify four major challenges for the future of water in Europe and beyond. These are:

- Increasing water stress or shortage of water, affecting an increasing part of the world and of increasing severity. Primary drivers for water stress are high population density, extensive and inefficient irrigation, rapid industrial growth and changes in rainfall patterns.
- Urbanisation. Rapidly increasing urbanisation is one of the most distinctive changes seen over the previous and current century. Flexible and innovative solutions are needed to cope with sudden and substantial changes in water demand for people and their associated economic activities. There is an increasing need for innovative water supply methods and technologies, while water re-use options have to be further developed and implemented.
- Extreme events. The climate change challenge is not just about long term changes in average precipitation, but also about increased frequency and severity of extreme events such as droughts and floods. There is a need for appropriate, timely and readily understandable mitigation, warning and management methods and measures to minimise short and long term damages. Solutions are required which will significantly reduce the social and economic impact.
- Many rural and under-developed areas lack significant infrastructure such as water and waste water services. People are self supporting and have small scale agricultural activities, while industrial activity is mostly absent. These areas often lack financial support from private enterprises (and public funding) as well as know-how for proper improvement, which would make them more attractive for new activities and boost the development in such regions.

On 17 October 2005, the WSSTP organised a Stakeholder Event in Budapest where the proposed Vision and Strategic Research Agenda documents were presented and discussed. Interested parties are invited to provide comments to both documents which are available at the following site: <http://www.wsstp.org/default.aspx>.

**7th Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development:** On 21 September 2005 the European Commission approved its detailed plans for implementing the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Provisional versions of the four main Specific Programmes, "Cooperation", "Ideas", "People" and "Capacities", each corresponding to a major objective of European research policy, are available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/documents\\_en.cfm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/future/documents_en.cfm). Technologies for managing resources or treating pollution more efficiently, in relation to water, soil, air, sea and other natural resources, or

waste, are mentioned as one of the main targets of the environmental research.

**Science-policy interface:** Worth to be noted is a joint initiative among DG RTD, DG ENV and the Joint Research Centre to improve the transfer of research outputs and their integration into water policy implementation steps. The initiative is known as **WISE-RTD** and is being developed in close connection with the HarmoniCA project (FP5-funded project).

A salient feature of discussions among the EC General Directorates and the scientific community highlighted that, at the present stage, knowledge generated by several research and demonstration projects is not reaching policy-makers in an efficient way. On the other hand, the consideration of research results by the policy-making community is not straightforward, mainly for political reasons and difficulties to integrate the latest research developments in legislation. The difficulty is enhanced by the fact that the policy-making community is probably not defining its role as "client" sufficiently well. In other words, the dialogue and communication are far from being what one would hope to ensure an efficient flow of information. In this respect, improvements could be achieved through the development of a "science-policy interface" so that R&D results are synthesised in a way that can efficiently feed the implementation and further reviews of the policies and that short, medium and long term research needs may be identified. This interface should include:

- ✓ A screening phase evaluating which type of research is needed (background information or tailor-made research and demonstration) in accordance with the policy step of concern (e.g. development of the daughter directives covered by the WFD, implementation issues, reviewing);
- ✓ A mechanism to ensure that the most promising research projects in support of the policies are "validated" through demonstration activities, disseminated efficiently and applied at the appropriate level (regional, national or EU);
- ✓ A management scheme involving both scientists and policy makers to discuss the corresponding research and policy agendas from the very beginning in order to ensure a more structured communication at all appropriate levels of policy formulation, development, implementation and review.

Operational steps of WISE-RTD have been proposed to the Strategic Coordination Group of the CIS in October 2005: A first phase (2006) will be developed under the HarmoniCA project framework, aiming to consolidate a webportal

prototype and test it with selected RTD and LIFE projects described on the basis of an agreed template. A second phase (2007) will focus on the validation of the webportal prototype in the framework of a new project to be submitted in the framework of the 5<sup>th</sup> SSP call for proposals (see above). The WISE-RTD portal should then be linked to WISE and provide user's friendly access to scientific information relevant to the WFD implementation by the time of the public consultation of the draft of the first river basin management plan (2008).

## LIFE

In September 2005 the European Commission formally gave its **support to 89 new projects** to be financed by LIFE Environment, representing an EU co-financing of €71 million. Of these, 19 projects deal with water management: addressing the impact of agricultural activities on water quality (10 projects), wastewater management (5), phasing out of discharges and emissions (1) and other water-related issues (3). For more information, please refer to:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/news/pressreleasearchive.htm>.

In addition the **best LIFE-Environment projects** completed in the period 2004-2005 were selected according to a set of best practice criteria developed by the Member States in collaboration with the Commission:

(<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/environment/life/project/bestlifeenv.htm>).

The results of the selection, as approved by the LIFE Committee on 28 July 2005, includes two projects dealing with water management: the Spanish project AFINO CONDUCTIVIDAD (Development of a new salt water purification system in the tanning sector) and an Italian LIFE-Project IMOS (Integrated Multi-Objective System for optimal management of urban drainage), the latter being placed in the Top 5. The main aim of the "Best LIFE-Environment Projects" exercise is to focus part of the European Commission's and individual Member States' communication actions on helping these 24 projects to further disseminate their results.

Other recently completed projects in the field of water, which will be eligible for next year's "Best LIFE-Environment Projects" exercise, include the project "Eutroph Monitor" led by Saarland University, which developed the methodology and performed a cross-border riverine study of diffuse pollution inputs in Saarland (Germany), Lorraine (France) and Luxembourg ([www.uni-saarland.de/fak8/beck/](http://www.uni-saarland.de/fak8/beck/)). Another is 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](http://www.osis.biz)).

Finally the last **call for proposals** under the current LIFE III programme has been closed. One of the five priority areas is dedicated to projects that specifically address current challenges in the field of European water policy, namely, the impact of agricultural and forest practices on water quality with regard to consequences on river basin management (surface and groundwater) and marine environment (eutrophication), improvements in wastewater management and treatment technologies with a view to increased quality of effluent and reuse needs, phasing out, and cessation of discharges and emissions, and losses of hazardous substances, and flood prevention and control in the context of river basin management.

### Forthcoming meetings (first half of 2006)<sup>3</sup>

- ✓ Working Group Groundwater (WG C), Brussels, 14/02/06
- ✓ CIS Strategic Coordination Group, Brussels, 22/02/06 and 15-16/05/06
- ✓ WFD and agriculture, Vienna, 2-3/03/06
- ✓ Working Group Ecostat (WG A), Ispra, 15-16/03/06
- ✓ Working Group Reporting (WG D), Brussels, 21/03/06
- ✓ Chemical Monitoring Activity: Brussels, 23/03/06 and Rome, 22/05/06
- ✓ 5<sup>th</sup> WISE-GIS Workshop, Brussels, 28/03/06
- ✓ Flood meeting, Brussels, 28/03/06
- ✓ **AT Floods Conference, 18-19/05/06**
- ✓ Water Directors meeting, Salzburg, 01-02/06/06
- ✓ **AT Groundwater Conference, Vienna, 22-23/06/06**
- ✓ Expert Advisory Forum on Priority Substances, Brussels, 27/06/06



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<sup>3</sup> Most of these meetings are based on invitations, i.e. they are not opened to external participations (except the conference marked in red in the table)