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Towards Integrated Catchment Management: Increasing the Dialogue between Scientists, Policy-makers and Stakeholders

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Description / Abstract

The aim of the Hydrology for the Environment, Life and Policy (HELP) project is to strengthen the role and inputs of the scientific community in the integrated catchment management process. Water resources management in the 21st century requires a radical reorientation and an effective dialogue between decision-makers, stakeholders and the scientific water community. This paper offers a skeleton worldview as a starting point for that dialogue by bringing together key issues as identified by water resource experts from different disciplines. Experiences from all over the world demonstrate the need for multistakeholder advocacy and the importance of compromise-building mechanisms. Water law defines the rules of the game and provides a necessary framework for policy and its execution. However, there must be adequate social acceptance and active compliance, otherwise the formal rules and administrative regulation will not be perceived as legitimate and ultimately could prove ineffective. The challenge now is to create management systems where the formal decision-makers interact with relevant members of the scientific community, users and other stakeholders for a coordinated approach that successfully orchestrates water uses towards internal compatibility. Integrated water resources management is essential for securing a proper overview of all the activities that depend on the same resource—the precipitation over the basin—and which are internally linked by the mobility of water from the water divide to the river mouth.

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