



CASE STUDY

France: Innovative instruments and institutions in implementing the EU WFD

Summary

The EU Water Framework Directive requires measures to achieve good status of all waters by 2015. In France, water management is planned at basin-level by state offices and water agencies, but measures are implemented by the local authorities. To meet these requirements, the i-Five project was launched, applying an action research methodology to selected areas. From this study, it is evident that interaction with stakeholders plays a central role.

Background

The i-Five project presents how the Water Framework Directive is implemented in the French case-study planned in the project. Central in project is the evaluation of innovative instruments and institutions (i-3's) for implementing the Water framework directive (2000/60/EC; WFD).

In France, we present the implementation of the WFD in the Thau basin. Interesting aspects of this implementation process include collaboration between the water sector and land-use planning sector and the cooperation between the authorities and different research projects. The project will be of interest to everybody who looks for contrasted examples of practical challenges arising from the field when multi-level and multi-purpose governance systems are trying to decide common water quality objective and to design common program of measures. It gives feed-backs on how the WFD is implemented at the local level in practice. The aim of the i-Five project is to support the implementation of the WFD by promoting the transboundary exchange of experiences, by broadening the range of methods and tools available to water managers, and by helping water managers to develop the best approach for their own circumstances. The aim of the case-study report is to provide the stakeholders with detailed information on the French context in Thau and to serve as a basis for analysing common difficulties and uncertainties, and diverging strategies and innovations.

Actions taken

To meet these requirements, the i-Five project ("Innovative Instruments and Institutions in Implementing the WFD") was co-financed as an IWRM-Net project by the EU and other partners and launched in 2008.

Three case studies in Germany, France and the Netherlands analyzed the institutional settings and specific innovative instruments and institutions in the context of the WFD implementation. Cemagref and AgroParistech-ENGREF carried out the French case study in the Thau basin, located on the Mediterranean coast, in the Rhone river basin district (South-East France).

The local authority in charge of land-use and water planning (syndicat mixte du bassin de Thau, SMBT) an “animateur” was hired to translate water-related issues to local stakeholders and to foster integration between scales, sectors and participation of different publics. “Animateurs” are positions supported by water agencies in local authorities to make the link between water and territorial management. They have existed in France since 1992.

The specificity of Thau is that water and land-use planning are combined. The Thau basin is a small catchment around a lagoon characterized by fishing and oyster production. Tourism and urban sprawl are strong driving forces along the coastal zone.

The consensus built between land-use planning and water management has given priority to traditional activities in this area, which resulted in restrictions in urban sprawl.

Interaction with stakeholders has played a central role in the i-Five project. These include the authorities responsible for implementing the WFD at the local, grassroots level, as well as other stakeholders involved in the implementation.

Outcomes

The French case study assesses the extent to which animateurs as instrument for integration, public participation and active involvement of local authorities, facilitate the Water Framework Directive implementation process within the administrative setting and, more in particular, look at their role within the overall horizontal and vertical interaction of decision making. The following benefits of an animateur for water management can be summarized:

- Increased translation and communication, which may lead to more active support from stakeholders
- More coordination between sectors and possible anticipation.
- Rooting expertise in local knowledge to design more locally adapted measures.
- More commitment of local actors towards water management.

Lessons Learned

The case study generates insights on integration, especially between land-use planning and water management and rooting expertise in local knowledge.

The person in charge of facilitating collaboration between institutions and sectors on water issues at sub-basin level, the sub-basin animateur, has a key-role for implementing the WFD objectives and overcoming integration challenges

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Supporting Materials

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Related IWRM Tools

Basin Management Plans, Basin Organisations, Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships, Facilitation and Mediation

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