



Organisation

Seecon Deutschland GmbH

Corresponding Author

Dr. Borowski-Maaser, Ilke

Corresponding Author Contact

ilke.borowski@seecon.org

Contributing Authors

Dr. Ridder, Dagmar Interwies, Eduard

Summary

The EU Water Framework Directive requires measures to achieve good status of all waters by 2015. In Germany, it is not the federal government that is in charge of implementation but it is the responsibility of the county. To meet the objective, transboundary exchange of experiences was promoted by broadening the range of tools available to water managers. It is evident that interaction with stakeholders plays a central role.

Background

This case-study report of the i-Five project presents the an analysis of the institutional settings in the context of the first implementation cycle focusing on the development of environmental objectives and the programme of measures. Special focus is given to the area cooperation in Lower Saxony (Germany) as one innovative instrument and institution (i-3's) for implementing the Water framework directive (2000/60/EC; WFD).

Central themes are transposition, coordination across scales, integration between sectors, public participation, local appropriation and the role of expertise.

The report addresses water managers who are in the position to design the implementation process of the WFD and are interested to learn from the Weser basin experiences with the area cooperation as a central i-3.

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 aims of the casestudy reports is to deepen the understanding of the challenges of implementing the WFD and to identify possible innovations in relation with their contexts.

Interaction with stakeholders plays 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.

Actions taken

To meet these requirements, the i-Five project ("Innovative Instruments and Institutions in Implementing the Water Framework Directive") was co-financed as an IWRM-Net project by the EU and other partners was 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. Seecon Deutschland GmbH carried out the German case study in the Weser basin.

In the river basin district of the Weser (located in North-West Germany in Lower Saxony) 28 so-called "area cooperations" were established. These invite local and regional bodies and institutions to contribute actively to the EU WFD implementation. They were the first multi-stakeholder instrument established area-wide in Lower Saxony and contributed strongly to the building of the network between the actors.

The Weser basin district is characterized by high amounts of salt in the water due to potash mining, anthropogenic increase of the nutrient load due to agricultural runoffs and sewage, and structural problems as reduced connectivity due to river development for power generation, shipping and agricultural purposes. In the studied areas agricultural and connectivity issues are most prevalent.

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Outcomes

The German case study assesses the extent to which area cooperations as instrument for active involvement of interest groups, facilitate the WFD 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 area cooperation for water management can be summarized:

- Increased networking which may lead to social learning and social cohesion among water actors
- More coordination between sectors and levels on the implementation of measures
- More locally/regionally adapted measures
- More commitment of local actors towards water management
- Raise of local funds (not necessarily in cash but in kind).

Lessons Learned

The case generated insights on public participation, especially on stakeholder involvement in an institutional and cultural environment which was not used to multi-lateral exchange.

Area cooperations cannot directly improve the implementation of measures. However, if managed carefully, they can contribute to a coordination process of selection and prioritization of measures.

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<https://dev.toolbox.venthic.com/case-study/germany-innovative-instruments-and-institutions-implementing-eu-wfd>