

**Statement of the German Federal Ministry of Transport,
Building and Housing on the European Initiative
Workshop: Water Framework Directive and Hydromorphology, Session III**

The German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing welcomes the initiative of the water directors to directly include the subject “Water Framework Directive and Hydromorphology” into the Common Implementation Strategy to the Water Framework Directive. The future challenges of transport and environment policy require a dialogue between the stakeholders of shipping and of environmental protection at national and at European level.

Shipping as an indispensable component of the European and international transport system plays an important role in the management of international transport movements. It is the declared goal of the European Community and its Member States to strengthen shipping and to shift traffic to the waterways.

Also waterways generate considerable economic and employment effects. In Germany, the economic sectors depending on seaports alone ensure approximately 300,000 jobs. Approximately 400,000 people are employed in German inland navigation and in the inland ports including the employees depending on the ports. The inland ports annually generate an investment volume of around 12 billion Euro.

The implementation of the Water Framework Directive is a process of many years which requires in all stages intensive dealings with shipping. The implementation of the subject “Water Framework Directive and Hydromorphology” into the Common Implementation Strategy and the foundation of the working groups “Technical Activity” and “Policy Integration Activity” established in the draft mandate “Water Framework Directive and hydromorphological pressures resulting from hydropower, navigation and flood defence activities, Phase I:2006” are first steps in this direction.

For the establishment of the working groups it is recommendable to use, in addition to the inclusion of DG TREN, the experience of the national technical administrations and other stakeholders from the Member States and to take care in staffing the various interest groups to have a balanced composition. Direct cooperation with the representatives of the shipping

interest, of hydropower, of agriculture and of flood protection guarantees concepts that can be actually implemented.

As regards the contents, the following aspects have to be taken into consideration in connection with the constitution of the working groups:

- Shipping has to be seen in its international context. National and international regulations and agreements have to be observed.
- The basic necessity of the maintenance and targeted development and construction of inland waterways and maritime shipping routes has to be recognized. Potential for taking into account objectives of the water framework directive can be shown by way of examples.
- The concretised objectives for natural, heavily modified and artificial waterways have to be realistic and feasible. Working aids which refer to the good status or the good ecological potential have to be subjected to an impact assessment by the user side.
- The inclusion and the economic management of sediments has to be guaranteed (see enclosure).

The inclusion of shipping into the Common Implementation Strategy to the Water Framework Directive which has been initiated with the workshop is an important step for the weighting and balancing of manifold interests. The German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Housing is readily available for further cooperation.

Key issue: Dredging and sediment management

The large river systems in Germany such as Danube, Rhine, Elbe, Weser, Ems, Odra have important navigation and shipping functions (7700 km coastal and inland waterways) where dredging is essential to maintain and develop the waterways. Furthermore Germany has more than 100 inland harbours and large sea harbours such as Hamburg, Bremen/Bremerhaven, Rostock, which receive large amounts of sediment both from the sea by tidal processes and from upstream areas by rivers. Dynamics of erosion and sedimentation determine the hydromorphology of water bodies. Moreover, the quality of sediments determine the ecological potential of water systems.

About 46 million m³ sediment have to be dredged annually. Most of this dredged sediment (around 41 million m³) is being dredged in the transitional and coastal part of the rivers/waterways and the connected harbours. Additionally considerable amounts are being dredged in singular capitol dredging operations for waterways and port development projects which vary in the magnitude of 0,1 to 60 million m³.

An economically and environmentally sound dredging and sediment management has to take into account that sediments are an essential natural part of water systems and cannot be taken out unrestrictedly without consequences for the morphological and ecological balance of the aquatic environment. Therefore, when sediments are removed the first option to be considered is the relocation or aquatic re-use of sediments within the water system – provided this can be done in an environmentally sound manner. This assessment is being done at the German waterways by routine since many years using national directives for the handling of dredged material (HABAK, HABAB) which include the demands coming from International Conventions like LC, OSPAR, HELCOM.

The overwhelming part of the dredged material can be relocated environmentally-sound and economically (2-5 Euro/m³) within the (water) system in suitable locations.

If relocation within the water is undesirable or impossible for environmental, morphological or spatial reasons, alternative options are employed such as beneficial use, treatment and confined disposal. Although only a relatively small but significant part is contaminated, the absolute quantities are considerable, and so are cost for transport, treatment and disposal (20-500 Euro/m³).

The WFD acknowledges that physical changes to the hydromorphology of water bodies are necessary to support defined human activities like navigation or shipping. The implementation of the European Water Framework Directive should therefore

- include and support the environmentally-sound and economic management of sediments and dredged material
- include clearly the understanding that (dredged) sediments are an essential natural part of water systems and cannot be taken out unrestrictedly without consequences for the morphological and ecological balance of the aquatic environment.
- help to reduce contamination at the source to such levels that dredging and relocation of sediment within the same water system can take place without special restrictions.
- clearly differentiate between environmental standards for the daily operational business (non-deterioration principle) and environmental standards for a good ecological quality or a good ecological potential to be reached in the future (2015).