

Conclusions to be presented at Water Directors' meeting, 29.-30. November 2007

At a time when Member States are finalising their approaches for setting objectives and planning of measures, the Anglo-German workshop "From monitoring to programmes of measures" provided a platform to exchange ideas and discuss different options. It was welcomed by participants as a timely event that helped to clarify and further refine concepts and approaches at a crucial stage in WFD implementation.

General issues

- It is important to develop a long-term vision (for 2027 and beyond) for river basin districts. These visions should clearly address the identified key water management issues. While it may be necessary to prioritise action and to define interim objectives, this long-term goal should never be lost from sight. Long-term visions are particularly important for transboundary catchments since they will facilitate international co-operation and co-ordination.
- At many sites, it will not be possible to reach Good Ecological Status by 2015.
- Uncertainty at different stages of the management process (assessment of status, effects and response time of measures, reaching objectives) is an important issue and presents many challenges for river basin management. However absolute certainty is neither possible nor required for the WFD River Basin management – the cyclical review process of the WFD provides adequate scope for necessary corrections and refinements.
- Stakeholder involvement is crucial. The dialogue with users and stakeholders in the framework of the CIS process needs to be continued.
- Water is at the heart of public interest. Public support can best be ensured by clearly communicating the benefits of WFD management efforts for people.

Biological and environmental standards

- Biological methods and data will ultimately be used for status assessment. However, they will not be fully operational or still in the testing phase by 2008. In the interim, environmental standards and guide values for supporting elements will be used as a proxy in combination with the available biological data.
- Uncertainty is most important at the border of good and moderate status. There are different ways of reducing uncertainty and presenting confidence levels (eg. plausibility checking, adaptive monitoring).
- The development status of biological assessment methods is relatively advanced with respect to rivers in general, and some elements have long been used for water quality assessment. However, with respect to some other elements such as fish, problems still exist.
- Intercalibration is important as a basis for ensuring comparability of classification results and explaining fairness in approaches across Europe. The current results of the intercalibration are already a good basis for planning; however, further development of the classification systems and continued efforts of the Member States will be necessary to successfully finalise the intercalibration work.

Setting objectives under uncertainty

- Conceptual approaches for dealing with situations where it is unlikely that Good Status could be reached by 2015 used in different Member States may look different but have very similar outcomes (see examples in Table 1 and Table 2 below).
- One option is to apply **extended deadlines** to allow for longer timescales. This will maintain ambition and ensure support for taking action. A stepwise approach is appropriate, whereby “right-direction” measures are implemented and their effects monitored (see Figure 1). Applying less stringent objectives from the beginning without the perspective of Good Status in subsequent management cycles should be restricted to clear cases where it is highly unlikely from the present knowledge that Good Status can be reached by 2027.
- **Interim targets**, either formulated as objectives for environmental status or in terms of management objectives on a regional scale (e.g. anticipated load reduction or implementation of specific measures/investments), are necessary when deadlines are extended, in order to ensure that action is not delayed. Interim targets can serve as a basis for checking progress, and can facilitate public information, participation and planning at lower administrative levels. Interim targets should not be confused with compliance objectives (legal concern). They will be set domestically at national or regional level, but may not be reported in the RBMPs.

Figure 1: Step-wise approach

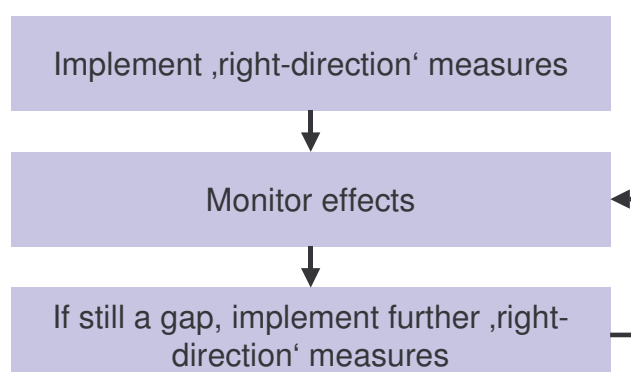


Table 1. Examples of different approaches to setting and communicating objectives for a poor status water body where achievement of good status is considered possible within the timeframe of the WFD but unlikely during the first management cycle.

	2009	2015	2021	2027
Option 1	Poor			Good
Option 2	Poor	Moderate	Moderate	Good
Option 3	Poor	Good (L)	Good (L)	Good (H*)

* L = low confidence; H = high confidence

Table 2. Examples of different approaches to setting and communicating objectives for a moderate status water body where achievement of good status is considered possible within the timeframe of the WFD but unlikely during the first management cycle.

	2009	2015	2021	2027
Option 1	Moderate			Good
Option 2	Moderate			Good
Option 3	Moderate	Good (L)	Good (L)	Good (H*)

* L = low confidence; H = high confidence

Option 1. Sets good status as the objective in 2027. Advantage: Ensures that – based on present knowledge – a realistic time frame to reach the objectives is developed and communicated. Disadvantage: May be difficult to motivate people to get measures in place early. Measures may be delayed.

Option 2. Sets good status as the objective in 2027 but also sets interim environmental or management objectives in 2015 and 2021. Advantage: Ensures that – based on present knowledge – a realistic time frame to reach the objectives is developed and communicated. When it is possible to set interim management objectives this helps to drive measures.

Option 3. Sets good status as the objective already in 2015 and communicates the present knowledge of a realistic timeframe in terms of confidence levels to reach the objective at a certain point in time. Advantage: Communicates the ultimate level of ambition throughout the whole process but avoids unrealistic expectations. Interim management objectives as good status provide strong incentive to drive measures.

Most participants in the workshop intend to use option 1 or option 2.

Programmes of Measures

- The first RBMPs will include many measures that are already existing and/or decided.
- **Prioritisation** is an important part of planning the programmes of measures. Prioritisation helps to maximise environmental benefits from investments and to increase acceptability by stakeholders. The UK and Germany use a mix of top down and bottom up prioritisation approaches.
- Information on **uncertainty** on the success of measures is one aspect used to prioritise action. Where confidence levels are too low, further investigations and clear follow-up activities should be a priority in order to reduce uncertainty. Other aspects in the prioritisation include inter alia cost effectiveness, dependence of other measures in the catchment, legal opportunities (e.g. renewal of licences) and availability of specific funding resources.
- Local knowledge is an important factor to design successful measures, especially when dealing with projects to improve hydromorphology. The **public participation** process is a key instrument to ensure its integration in the management process.
- **Co-ordination** of measures between different parts of river basins is crucial, since the effectiveness of local measures may depend on measures taken elsewhere in the basin. Measures to address basin-scale problems need to be agreed at basin level and to be included in the programmes.