



Organisation

GWP Central and Eastern Europe

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Summary

In the River Basin District of the CEE region, the countries are cooperating to develop transboundary management, using the International River Basin Commission as a platform. The aim is to address national IWRM priorities, strengthen cooperation with major stakeholders and initiate changes in policies and legislation. This case illustrates the difficulties to balance national priorities in a transboundary context.

Background

The region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), covered by GWP, has a total area of over 2.03 million km², mostly located in the Baltic and Black sea basins. Throughout the region many water ecosystems have suffered from degradation and are threatened by pollution, overuse of surface and groundwater, as well as habitat losses. Application of integrated approaches to water management, use and development, meeting the water demand and satisfying ecosystem needs, remains a key challenge.

GWP CEE includes 12 country water partnerships that provide an inclusive and neutral platform for stakeholders. Considering the EU enlargement in 2007, 10 countries are now EU members. This opens up opportunities for new joint ventures within the union and allows the CWPs to act as IWRM facilitators in non-EU countries.

In all river basin districts of CEE region, countries have been working on their national management plans. As these plans need to be established for the whole river basin, the countries are also cooperating on the international level to develop its transboundary version, based exactly on national plans. They use the International River Basin Commissions (for Danube, Oder, Elbe, Vistula, Daugava and others) as a platform to discuss and agree on the transboundary aspects of the water resources plans and their implementation.

The objective of the Dialogues is to support countries with integrated approaches to water resources management and use. These dialogues will serve as a first stage for upcoming multi-sector dialogues, aiming to raise political will to adopt IWRM principles.

Actions taken

To fulfill its mission to support countries in sustainable management of their water resources, GWP has used dialogues as facilitated conversations among groups with often disparate views to discuss contentious water management issues. Responding to the national water priority papers and second informal IWRM survey in 2006, GWP announced the National Dialogues Initiative.

Country water partnerships (under GWP CEE) in 12 countries of Central and Eastern Europe organised national IWRM dialogues from 2006 until 2007. The following countries were involved: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Ukraine.

The dialogues were generally organized by the CWPs in cooperation with the consulting partner organizations and wide range of stakeholders including governments, universities, private sector, NGOs, local municipalities and others. In some countries, such as Hungary and Poland, the dialogue initiative continued with more than a single event.

The dialogues reflected priorities on the national level ranging from river basin planning, sustainable sanitation, water governance, and cross sectoral cooperation. Goal of the dialogues was to address national IWRM priorities, strengthen cooperation with major stakeholders and initiate changes in policies and legislation.

GWP CEE and all CWPs supported respective International River Basin Commissions in capturing a wide spectrum of stakeholders ranging from governments, businesses, NGOs and local municipalities.

The River Basin Management Plans adopted in the CEE region include measures to achieve a good status by 2015.

Outcomes

Despite their common past, the dialogues showed a great deal of diversity among the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. They truly reflected priorities on national level ranging from river basin planning, sanitation issues, IWRM in urban areas, water governance, cross sectoral cooperation and others.

The dialogues were the opportunity for country water partnerships to clarify the EU concept of river basin planning brought by Water Framework Directive and IWRM planning. They also helped to identify gaps that were later addressed by GWP or its partner organizations. One example of such activity is the GWP CEE sustainable sanitation initiative which revealed that more than 20 million people, especially in rural areas, have no access to proper municipal waste water treatment services.

In most cases outcomes of the dialogues were instrumental to governments reporting on the progress of IWRM plans and EU WFD as well. The outcomes further led to common declarations with governments, strengthening cooperation with major stakeholders and changes in legislation. The dialogues attracted not only new stakeholders but also financial commitments by partner organizations. In many countries, GWP Water Partnerships are planning to continue the dialogues with their own resources. The meetings also clearly demonstrated that CWPs are recognized as IWRM facilitators able to bring together different players to discuss complex issues of water management.

Lessons Learned

Dialogues conducted showed different national approaches to development of RBMPs in individual

countries, distinct priorities in water management, and finally specific methods used for stakeholder engagement.

Ukrainian participants proposed that IWRM Implementation Strategy should become a part of National Environmental Strategy and it should be included in the new program of cooperation between EU and Ukraine.

In Romania, a Common Declaration considered IWRM as overarching aim to which EU water directives contribute and create synergic effects. The Declaration called upon government to keep MDG commitments to be harmonized with EU legislation despite challenging implementation.

The dialogues reached stakeholders outside traditional water sector. Good example is very active engagement of local authorities represented by Association of Towns and Municipalities in Slovakia.

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