Topic 4

The EU Water Framework Directive and Groundwater Daughter Directive: which experience feedback? Which issues for the new cycle?

The Water Framework Directive 2000/60/CE (WFD) requires Member States to protect, enhance and restore waters with the ultimate objective of achieving "good status" for both surface and groundwater bodies. For groundwater, good status covers both quantitative and chemical status. While "good quantitative status" is clearly defined in the WFD, this is not the case for the complex "good chemical status". A specific daughter directive was published in December 2006 to provide additional clarity and operational guidance. Indeed, this groundwater directive (GWD) sets criteria for assessing groundwater chemical status. And it gives specifications for the identification of degradation trends in chemical quality that require Member States to take action to prevent or limit inputs of pollutants into groundwater.

The WFD is now entering a new cycle. The deadline for reports on the 1st River Basin Management Plans was March 22, 2010. Since the WFD is an iterative process, Member States are now entering the planning stage of the 2nd River Basin Management Plans (to be reported in 2015). So now is the right time to think about the lessons learned in the last 10 years. During this period, Member States aimed to characterize groundwater bodies, to monitor their chemical and quantitative status, and to introduce cost effective measures to protect and restore "poor status" groundwater.

Besides, there is today a serious need to extend the fields covered by the directives. Recent related legal texts and new topics that have emerged since the adoption of the WFD and GWD need to be discussed and integrated (e.g. climate change, emerging pollutants, etc.).

For this session, we would particularly appreciate contributions focussing on the following issues:

1. Lessons learned from the first river basin management planning stage and WFD reporting: characterizing groundwater bodies including the links between human activities and the status of groundwater bodies; monitoring groundwater bodies; assessing the chemical and quantitative status of groundwater; linking groundwater to connected aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, implementing an efficient programme of measures and assessing its efficiency. What were the main constraints and difficulties encountered? How can we ensure the information that is produced is relevant to the requirements of the WFD? Are the approaches and methodologies used by Member States and recommended by the Commission sufficient and appropriate? How can they be improved?

2. The development of tools to support the management of groundwater bodies at different scales (local, district, national, European): databases facilitating reporting to the

Commission (WISE Water Information System for Europe), GIS and databases supporting communication at the local level, etc.

3. What are the future challenges for groundwater protection in Europe which are not yet covered by the WFD or by the groundwater directive? Experiences and views about the links between the WFD/GWD and other pieces of legislation are welcomed (e.g. measures taken to mitigate and adapt to climate change such as geological CO_2 storage, the use of aquifer thermal energy; soil protection; agricultural and industrial policies, etc.)

4. Innovative experiences in non-EU countries: lessons learned and recommendations, successful approaches to implement a legal framework for protecting groundwater.