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Project Activity 2.3 Meeting Report 1st River Basin Management Planning Workshop

March 2014



1st River Basin Management Planning Workshop

Minsk, Republic of Belarus

20-21 March, 2014

Venue: Conference-hall, Republican Study Center of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus

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Meeting Report

20 March 2014

Mr Sergei Zavyalov, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of Republic of Belarus

The meeting was opened Mr Sergei Zavyalov, Head of Department of Regulation of Impact on Atmospheric Air and Water Resources. He welcomed the representatives from the participating countries, the contractors and project team. He noted the importance of the River Basin Management Planning as a cornerstone of IWRM and the strength of the EU WFD legislation in guiding the process. He informed the meeting of the development of a new water code for Belarus which incorporates the basin principle and embraces the IWRM concept and which is a new departure for the Republic of Belarus. He welcomed the EPIRB project as a timely and highly appropriate intervention.

Ivelina Dilovska, Human Dynamics, EPIRB Project Director

Ms Dilovska thanked Mr Zavyalov for his welcoming words and briefly described the purpose of the EPIRB project and its importance to the EU. She welcomed the participants and wished them a successful and fruitful meeting.

Mr Zavyalov was proposed and seconded as the Chairperson for the meeting. The draft agenda was accepted with no changes (see annex 1).

Introductions were made by the meeting participants. A full list of participants is given in annex 2.

Workshop Objectives and Procedures, Zurab Jincharadze, Deputy Team Leader

The workshop objectives below were explained in detail.

- Introduce the EPIRB project technical team, gain a common understanding on the development of RBMPs over the next 12 months and detail the project support to be provided
- Outline the process for development of draft WFD compliant RBMP over the next twelve months
- Provide an overview on previous work and assessments that will be needed as basis of the RBMPs
- Discuss an approach of a pressure/impacts analysis and risk assessment
- Identify the milestones in the development, outline a Roadmap and investigate specific basin issues needed to develop the RBMPs
- Establish and facilitate lines of communication between the beneficiaries, the contractor and NWME in each basin

- Review the RBMP development programme and its coordination with other aspects of the project

The workshop was informal event and participants were encouraged to take an active role, including asking the presenters questions at any time. The workshop was split into presentations and practical sessions and practical groups were formed based on the pilot basins.

All workshop presentations are contained in annex 3.

WFG Compliant River Basin Management: An Overview, Ms Birgit Vogel.

Ms Vogel gave a presentation of the stages and elements in the development of a WFD compliant River Basin Management Plan based on her experience working with the Austrian water regulatory authorities and the ICPDR. In the presentation Ms Vogel high-lighted the problems and challenges including lack of data and water body typology. She went through the RBMP stages and linked them to the contractors ToR and deliverables and explained how the contractors and EPIRB would work together to develop the plan.

Break-out session 1

There was a very active Q&A session after the break-out session during which numerous topics were discussed including:

- A general lack of data and inconsistency in monitoring
- Weakness in water governance
- Need for capacity building and investment in monitoring programmes
- Methodology for water body at risk assessments

There was a general discussion on how to move the RBMP beyond the Pressures and Impacts analysis stage and onto the development of the Programme of Measures. The setting of Environmental Objectives and their function in structuring the RBMP was not fully appreciated or understood.

Risk Assessment and Design of Monitoring Programmes, Ms Birgit Vogel and Tim Turner

The presenters explained the steps in undertake the water body at risk assessment based on simple criteria without necessarily requiring full data records. The required monitoring programmes were outlined (surveillance, operational and investigatory) the type (Ecological, HM, Chemical status and GW) and the periodicity. The meeting was told how EPIRB would prepare guidelines for establishment of the various monitoring programmes at the national level and would in conjunction with the contractors design the monitoring programmes for the pilot projects.

Break-out session 2

The discussion session focused on the issue of monitoring programmes with many issues emerging including:

- Lack of WFD compliant monitoring programmes in general.
- Lack of compliance monitoring of existing water discharge licences and minimal policing
- In some countries no biological monitoring and no ecological status monitoring
- Lack of up to date methodology for establishing ecological flows
- No Hydro-Morphological monitoring programmes.
- Limited diffuse pollution monitoring
- In some countries limited laboratory capacity and funding

- Lack of water resource cadastres

The meeting requested the project to provide guidelines and threshold values for undertaking the At Risk assessment. This was agreed.

Establishment of Environmental Objectives for Pilot RBMPs, Ms Birgit Vogel, RBMP NKE.

The Environmental Objectives given in the WFD focus on achieving 'good' status for all water bodies within two planning cycles (12 years). It was explained how member states could defer the target dates.

Break-out session 3

Discussion centred on how realistic it would be to achieve 'good' status in what would be a relatively short time period given the level of investment needed and other pressing development requirements. In some highly polluted basins could these targets ever be achieved? What would be the implications of achieving good HM status?

The subject was difficult. Tim Turner said it should be re-visited at the third workshop when discussing the Programme of Measures, particularly the scope and speed of implementation.

Development of Basin Wide and National Programme of Measures, Zurab Jincharadze, Deputy Team Leader

The type and scale of measures to be included in the Programme of Measures (PoM) was described as well as possible timetables linked to the six year planning cycle. It was emphasised that the PoM should be tied to the available resources and should not be simply a shopping list. The PoM should be a mix of national and basin interventions. Priority measures should be identified and should be included under the pilot measures to be supported by the project.

Break-out session 4

It was evident that only a few of the basin teams had addressed the development of the PoM. Many of the proposals were again linked to the monitoring programmes and systems and very few proposals were for infrastructure investments. The other suggested measures included:

- Strengthening of Basin Management Organisations
- Development of secondary, regulatory legislation
- Increased waste water treatment capacity

It was noted that there were no proposed measures for achieving good hydro-morphological status.

Public awareness rising and consultations for local national stakeholders, Ms Imola Coszta, REC Consultant

The consultant outlined the WFD requirements for public consultation in development of the RBMP and described how these requirements would be met by the project. Early stakeholder meetings would be held in June 2014, however most work would be undertaken after the draft RBMP had been issued in December 2014; the project would be active throughout 2015, running in parallel with the adoption procedures.

Break-out session 5

The discussion groups noted:

- The consultation timeline was tight and would need to be compliant with both national and WFD requirements
- Consultation mechanisms need to be discussed with the NCCs
- The adoption of the RBMP by the end of the project in 2015 may not be possible in some countries – the team leader pointed out that the EC expects final outputs from projects.
- The drafting of a joint plan for the River Prut in the project timeline will be difficult.

Coordination, Timing and Delivery, Tim Turner, Team Leader

The Team Leader explained how the RBMP contracts would be managed by Zurab Jincharadze assisted by Birgit Vogel. The project expects a high product standard and reports which did not meet these standards and requirements of WFD would be returned for revision. Coordination between the beneficiary, contractor and project would be facilitated by the NWMEs. The final draft RBMP would be a combined product of the contractor and the EPIRB project, with the water body delineation and the monitoring programme designs being undertaken by the project. The Team Leader acknowledged the tightness of the RBMP programme but emphasised the need for the contractors to meet the deadlines set out in the ToR.

Meeting summary and closure

The Team leader described the how, running in parallel with the contracts, the EPIRB would deliver a series of workshops of which this overview workshop was the first. The other workshop themes and dates were given as:

Pressure and Impact and At Risk Assessments – June, Batumi Georgia
 Environment Objectives and PoM – August (subsequently postponed to October, Minsk)
 RBMP – December, Kiev

It was agreed that the project would prepare At Risk assessment guidelines by the end of May. It was noted that the contractor teams would need similar guidelines for the development of Environmental Objectives and the PoM. The project will organise the first stakeholder consultation meetings in June in the pilot basins and in conjunction with the NCC meetings in order to explain the project to the basin stakeholders.

Mr Zavylov closed the meeting, thanking the participants for their efforts and wishing them success in their future work. Tim Turner also thanked the participants and said he looked forward to seeing them at the next RBMP workshop in Batumi, Georgia in June.