Water protection and management (Water Framework Directive)

The European Union (EU) has established a common framework for water protection and management, which aims to protect and restore aquatic ecosystems, and to guarantee long-term, sustainable water usage for individuals, businesses and the natural world.

ACT

Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2000 establishing a framework for Community action in the field of water policy [See amending acts].

SUMMARY

This Framework-Directive has several objectives such as preventing and reducing pollution, promoting sustainable water usage, protecting the environment, improving the state of aquatic eco-systems and reducing the effects of floods and droughts.

It has established a framework for the protection of:

- inland surface waters ;
- groundwater ;
- transitional waters ; and
- and coastal waters .

Its ultimate objective is to achieve a good status for all European Union waters by 2015.

River basins and districts

Member States have to identify all the river basins lying within their national territory and to assign them to individual river basin districts . River basins covering the territory of more than one Member State are assigned to an international river basin district.

Member States are to designate a competent authority for the application of the rules provided for in this Framework-Directive within each river basin district.

Identification and analysis of waters

Each Member State shall produce:

- an analysis of the characteristics of each river basin district;
- a review of the impact of human activity on water;
- an economic analysis of water use;

- a register of protected areas, that is, areas identified as requiring special protection (areas identified for drinking water abstraction and other areas listed in Annex IV of the Directive);

- a survey of all bodies of water used for abstracting water for human consumption and producing more than 10 m3 per day or serving more than 50 persons.

This analysis should be revised every six years thereafter.

Management plans and programmes of measures

The **management plans** aim to:

- prevent deterioration of the state of **bodies of surface water**, and restore and enhance this state in order to achieve good chemical and ecological status of such water by 2015 at the latest, while reducing pollution from discharges and emissions of hazardous substances;

- protect, restore and enhance the status of all **bodies of groundwater**, by preventing the pollution and deterioration of groundwater, and ensuring a quantitative balance between groundwater abstraction and replenishment;

- preserve **protected areas** requiring special protection in terms of specific community legislation concerning the protection of bodies of surface water and ground water or conserving the habitats of species which rely directly upon the water.

The management plans for river basin districts can be complemented by more detailed management programmes and plans for a sub-basin, a sector or a particular type of water.

The first management plans were drafted in 2009 within each river basin district, taking into account the results of analyses and studies conducted. They cover the period 2009-2015 and will be reviewed in 2015, and every six years thereafter.

The Member States shall also ensure that a **programme of measures** is drafted for each river basin district, which takes into account the results and analyses of the water and is aimed at achieving the environmental objectives stated in the Directive. Each programme consists of basic measures, that is, minimum requirements which must be observed in order to comply with the Directive's objectives and, if necessary, additional measures.

Pricing policy

The Member States should ensure that the policy of tarification of water encourages consumers to use resources efficiently and that different economic sectors contribute to the costs of services relating to water usage, including environmental costs and resources.

Applying the Framework-Directive

Member States shall encourage participation by all stakeholders in the implementation of this Framework-Directive, specifically with regard to the management plans for river basin districts. Projects from the management plans must be submitted for a public consultation for a minimum period of 6 months.

Member States shall introduce arrangements to ensure that effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties are imposed in the event of breaches of the provisions of this Framework-Directive. A temporary deterioration in bodies of water does not constitute a

breach of the Directive, if it is the result of exceptional and unforeseeable circumstances related to an accident, natural causes or a case of force majeure.

REFERENCES

Act	Entry into force - Date of expiry	Deadline for transposition in the Member States	Official Journal
Directive 2000/60/EC	22.12.2000	22.12.2003	OJ L 327 of 22.12.2000

Amending act(s)	Entry into force	Deadline for transposition in the Member States	Official Journal
Decision 2455/2001/EC	16.12.2001	-	OJ L 331 of 15.12.2001
Directive 2008/32/EC	21.3.2008	-	OJ L 81 of 20.3.2008
Directive 2009/31/EC	25.6.2009	25.6.2011	OJ L 140 of 5.6.2009
Directive 2013/39/EU	13.9.2013	14.9.2015	L 226 of 24.8.2013
Directive 2013/64/EU	1.1.2014	Different according to the articles	OJ L 352 of 28.12.2013

The successive amendments and corrections to Directive 2000/60/EC have been incorporated in the original text. This consolidated version is of documentary value only.

AMENDMENT OF ANNEXES

Annex X – List of priority substances in the field of water policy, that is, those which pose a significant risk to the environment.

Directive 2008/105/EC [Official Journal L 348 of 24.12.2008].

Directive 2013/39/EU [Official Journal L 226 of 24.8.2013].

RELATED ACTS

Communication from the Commission of 22 March 2007 - Towards sustainable water management in the European Union - First stage in the implementation of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC [COM(2007) 128 final – Not published in the Official Journal].

In this report the Commission sets out the results provided by the Member States concerning the application of the Water Framework Directive. Among other things, it mentions that there is a considerable risk that several Member States will fail to meet the

targets set in the Framework Directive, in particular because of the physical deterioration of aquatic ecosystems, especially as a result of overexploitation of water resources and disturbing levels of pollution from diffuse sources. The Commission also indicates that there have been problems with meeting the deadline for incorporating the Framework Directive into national law and shortcomings in the actual transposition process in some cases. However, the establishment of river basin districts and the designation of the competent national authorities seem to be well under way, although progress does still need to be made with regard to international cooperation in some instances. The Commission also indicates that there are considerable differences in the quality of the environmental and economic assessments made in respect of river basins as well as shortcomings in the economic analyses carried out. The Commission finishes by making a number of recommendations to the Member States with a view to making good the shortcomings reported, integrating sustainable management of water into other national policies and making the most of public participation, and gives advance notice of what it plans to do in future in the context of European water management policy.

Report from the Commission of 1 April 2009 published in accordance with article 18.3 of the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC on programmes for monitoring of water status [COM(2009) 156 final – Not published in the Official Journal].

Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the Implementation of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC) River Basin Management Plans [COM(2012) 670 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

The evaluation of river basin district management plans suggests that despite the progress made, a good state of waters will not be achieved by 2015 for a significant proportion of bodies of water, and this is due to various factors. The Commission's evaluation of river basin district management plans details the main obstacles encountered in each Member State, and highlights that hydromorphological pressures, pollution and excessive abstraction remain the main pressures affecting the aquatic environment.

Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: A Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources [COM(2012) 673 final - Not published in the Official Journal].

This blueprint is aimed at removing obstacles which obstruct measures designed to safeguard water resources. It recognises that aquatic environments differ significantly across the European Union, and therefore, in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, does not propose a single solution to cover all. It emphasises fundamental topics such as:

- improving soil usage;
- combatting water pollution;
- using water more efficiently and improving its resilience;
- improving the governance of water resource managers.

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