

# Water Framework Directive, WFD

“An EU Directive is a form of legislation that is ‘directed’ at the Member States. **It will set out the objective or policy** which needs to be attained. **The Member States must then pass the relevant domestic legislation** to give effect to the terms of the Directive within a time frame set in the directive, usually two years.”

# WFD approach

The new European Water Policy was developed in an open consultation process involving all interested parties (local and regional authorities, water users and non governmental organizations NGOs)

The **WFD sets specific deadlines** for Member States to achieve ambitious environmental objectives for aquatic ecosystems.

The WFD addresses:

- inland surface waters
- transitional (estuary) waters
- coastal waters
- ground water

Water management is based on river basins, the natural geographical and hydrological units  
→ River Basin Districts (RBDs)

# WFD approach

Member States are obliged to establish a **River Basin Management Plan (RBMP)** and a **Programmes of Measures (POMs)** for each river basin district (or part of international river basin district within its territory)

The River Basin management plan will:

record the current status of water bodies within the river basin district

- set out the measures planned to meet the objectives
- act as the reporting mechanism to the European Commission and the public

“A lot of effort has been put into the preparation and drafting of the first RBMPs and knowledge of the status of water has considerably improved. However, the Commission’s assessment shows that more efforts are needed to ensure the achievement of the WFD objectives in the 2015, 2021 and 2027 planning cycles”

- River basin districts

- The size and amount of river basin districts vary between EU member states
- In some cases several very small rivers are included in one river basin district
- Areas (descending directly to the sea) between rivers are included in river basin districts of neighbouring rivers.

[Map of National and International River Basin Districts:](#)



# WFD Directive

- Achieving “good status” for all waters by a set deadline 2014”
- Streamlining legislation
- Water management based on river basins
- Expanding the scope of water protection to all waters, surface waters and groundwater
- ‘Combined approach’ of emission limit values and quality standards (sources + receiving water bodies)
- Getting citizens involved more closely

→ Most of the targets postponed till 2027



# WFD Directive

Learn more about the WFD:

[http://www.globaqua-project.eu/files/WP12\\_D12\\_2\\_First\\_Policy\\_Briefs.pdf](http://www.globaqua-project.eu/files/WP12_D12_2_First_Policy_Briefs.pdf)

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/info/intro_en.htm)

# WFD Commission report 2015

The evaluation is based on the first reports on specific actions taken by Member States to implement the measures summarized in their RBMPs (available 2012)

Due to decades of degradation and persisting ineffective management, we still have a **long way to go before the quality of all EU waters is good enough.**

2012: **about half of the EU surface and ground waters are unlikely to reach a good ecological status in 2015.** Moreover, gaps in monitoring of the chemical status of surface waters were so significant that in 2012 the status of over 40 % of water bodies was unknown and it was **impossible to establish a baseline.** The situation seems to be more positive for groundwater, but problems in some basins are still severe.

# WFD Commission report 2015

- We use too much water (over-abstraction)
- Diffuse source loading from agriculture needs to be further reduced

The main challenges for the EU 15\* relate **to maintaining and renewing sewerage collection and treatment systems**, while the **newer Member States need to continue their work on setting up the minimum required infrastructure**. Furthermore, sewer overflows remain one of the main pollution sources in urban areas, requiring significant investment in coming years in across the EU

\*Austria, Belgium, Denmark Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Sweden, Portugal, Spain, UK



# WFD evaluation (2015), recommendations

Water scarcity and droughts are an increasing problem in many areas of Europe, at least seasonally, due to climate change. Quantitative problems are progressively impacting more river basin districts across the **EU and Member States need to take preventive measures to avoid moving into unsustainable levels of abstraction.**

Member States should adjust their inadequate **pricing of water resources**, especially but not only in the agricultural sector.

# WFD: great expectations, problems in implementation

Learn more about the subject:

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S004896971632157X>

# WFD: Status today

- The EU's WFD will be revised during the following years
- 2015 was the end of first management cycle
- The revision process of the Water Framework Directive is started with the assessment of river management plans. (The 3<sup>rd</sup> implementation report – assessment of the River Basin Management Plans, 2012)
- First communication concerning EU's waters status was published in 2017.
- Then the need for revision of WFD is assessed and an economic analysis of EU water policies is prepared. **A study on the economic benefits of EU water policy and the costs of non-implementation is currently prepared.** It "aims at generating new and solid economic arguments to promote effective protection and efficient use of water resources for the well-being of European nature and citizens."

# References:

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/>

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/participation/map\\_mc/countries/finland\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/participation/map_mc/countries/finland_en.htm)

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/eurobarometer.htm>

[www.environment.fi](http://www.environment.fi)

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