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Water legislation at EU level

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

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Summary



The European Union (EC) has established a framework for the protection of:

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

This Framework-Directive has a number of objectives, such as preventing and reducing pollution, promoting sustainable water usage, environmental protection, improving aquatic ecosystems and mitigating the effects of floods and droughts.

Its ultimate objective is to achieve “good ecological and chemical status” for all Community waters by 2015.

Administrative arrangements



- 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 will be 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



By 2004 at the latest, 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 areas requiring special protection;
- 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 must be revised in 2013 and every six years thereafter.

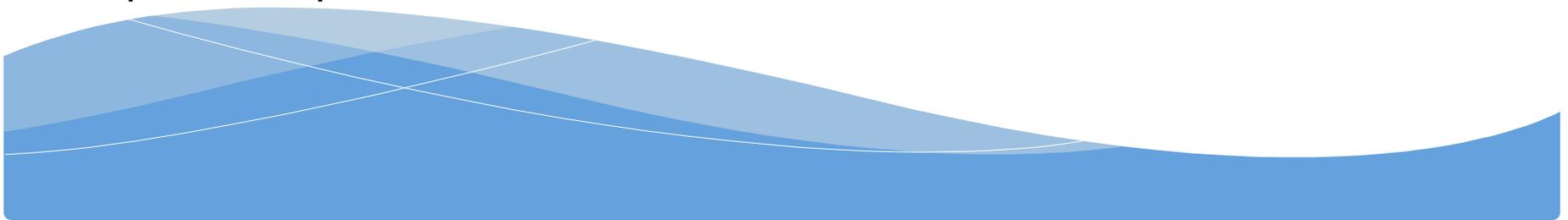
Management plans and programmes of measures



In 2009, nine years after the Framework-Directive entered into force, management plans were produced for each river basin district, taking account of the results of the analyses and studies carried out. These plans cover the period 2009-2015. They shall be revised in 2015 and then every six years thereafter.

The management plans must be implemented in 2012. They aim to:

- prevent deterioration, enhance and restore bodies of surface water, achieve good chemical and ecological status of such water by 2015 at the latest and reduce pollution from discharges and emissions of hazardous substances;
- protect, enhance and restore the status of all bodies of groundwater, prevent the pollution and deterioration of groundwater, and ensure a balance between groundwater abstraction and replenishment;
- preserve protected areas.





- 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.
- Temporary deterioration of bodies of water is not in breach of the requirements of this Framework-Directive if it is the result of circumstances which are exceptional or could not reasonably have been foreseen and which are due to an accident, natural causes or force majeure.
- 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 to public consultation for at least 6 months.
- From 2010, Member States must ensure that [water pricing policies](#) provide adequate incentives for users to use water resources efficiently and that the various economic sectors contribute to the recovery of the costs of water services, including those relating to the environment and resources.
- Member States must 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 list of priority substances selected from among the ones which present a significant risk to the aquatic environment has been drawn up at European level. This list is set out in Annex X to this Framework-Directive.

Key terms used in the act



- **Inland waters:** all standing or flowing water on the surface of the land, and all groundwater on the landward side of the baseline from which the breadth of territorial waters is measured.
- **Surface water:** inland waters, except groundwater, transitional waters and coastal waters, except in respect of chemical status, for which territorial waters are also included.
- **Groundwater:** all water which is below the surface of the ground in the saturation zone and in direct contact with the ground or subsoil.
- **Transitional waters:** bodies of surface water in the vicinity of river mouths which are partly saline in character as a result of their proximity to coastal waters but which are substantially influenced by freshwater flows.
- **Coastal water:** surface water on the landward side of a line every point of which is at a distance of one nautical mile on the seaward side from the nearest point of the baseline from which the breadth of territorial waters is measured, extending where appropriate up to the outer limit of transitional waters.
- **River basin:** the area of land from which all surface run-off flows through a sequence of streams, rivers and, possibly, lakes into the sea at a single river mouth, estuary or delta.
- **River basin district:** the area of land and sea, made up of one or more neighbouring river basins together with their associated groundwaters and coastal waters, which is identified under Article 3(1) as the main unit for management of river basins.

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 – Not published in the Official Journal.

Sets out the results provided by the Member States concerning the application of the Water Framework Directive. There is a considerable risk that several Member States will fail to meet the targets set, 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. 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. 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. 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.

It 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

RECENT RELATED ACTS



- 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](#) of 14.11.2012).
- Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council - The Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive: actions towards the 'good status' of EU water and to reduce flood risks ([COM\(2015\) 120 final](#) of 9.3.2015).



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, pp. 1-5
Directive 2008/32/EC	21.3.2008	-	OJ L 81 of 20.3.2008, pp. 60-61
Directive 2009/31/EC	25.6.2009	25.6.2011	OJ L 140 of 5.6.2009, pp. 114-135
Directive 2013/39/EU	13.9.2013	14.11.2015	OJ L 226 of 24.8.2013, pp. 1-17
Directive 2013/64/EU	1.1.2014	Varies depending on the articles	OJ L 353 of 28.12.2013, pp. 8-12

References



Annex X – List of priority substances in the field of water policy

Directive [2008/105/EC](#) [Official Journal L 348 of 24.12.2008]. Attached (EN)

2008/915/EC: Commission Decision of 30 October 2008 establishing, pursuant to Directive 2000/60/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council, the values of the Member State monitoring system classifications as a result of the intercalibration exercise (notified under document number C(2008) 6016) Text with EEA relevance. Attached (EN, ES,IT).

See other documents attached:intercalibration follow up of 2013 (EN,ES,IT) and Tarification Policy of 2000 (EN, ES, IT).
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Common Implementation Strategy (CIS)



To address the challenges in a co-operative and coordinated way, the Member States, Norway and the Commission agreed on it only five months after the entry into force of the Directive.

The results of this work, for instance [guidance documents](#), [key events](#) and additional [resource documents](#) related to different aspects of the implementation are available on CIRCABC.

More details on the overall concept, the numerous activities and the mandates of the Working Groups under the Common Implementation Strategy are given in the [Work programmes](#) informally agreed by EU Water Directors.

The common strategy also supports the Commission in delivering on its obligations for further policy development (Daughter Directives on [groundwater](#) and on [priority substances](#)).

In addition, the [Directive 2007/60/EC on the assessment and management of flood risks](#) is closely coordinated with the Water Framework Directive. The Common Implementation Strategy therefore also supports the implementation of the Floods Directive, through Working group F on Floods.

TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION



Year	Issue	Reference
2000	Directive entered into force	Art. 25
2003	Transposition in national legislation Identification of River Basin Districts and Authorities	Art. 23 Art. 3
2004	Characterisation of river basin: pressures, impacts and economic analysis	Art. 5
2006	Establishment of monitoring network Start public consultation (at the latest)	Art. 8 Art. 14
2008	Present draft river basin management plan	Art. 13
2009	Finalise river basin management plan including programme of measures	Art. 13 & 11
2010	Introduce pricing policies	Art. 9
2012	Make operational programmes of measures	Art. 11
2015	Meet environmental objectives First management cycle ends Second river basin management plan & first flood risk management plan.	Art. 4
2021	Second management cycle ends	Art. 4 & 13
2027	Third management cycle ends, final deadline for meeting objectives	Art. 4 & 13

WFD CIRCABC - the Information Exchange Platform



- CIRCABC stands for "**C**ommunication and **I**nformation **R**esource **C**entre for **A**ministrations, **B**usinesses and **C**itizens" and it is a web-based service provided by the European Commission.
- Aims to improve the information exchange between Countries, European institutions, the various stakeholders and the interested public.
- Accessible to all public: transparency.
- Data protection.
- If questions, the [EC Central Help Desk](#) is available.
- If help needed regarding the use "[CIRCABC Help](#)" of "frequently asked questions" can be consulted. Alternatively, send an email to the "[Water Mailbox](#)" of the Environment Directorate-General.

WFD Implementation Reports



The Commission has to assess the progress in the implementation of the WFD (art. 18)

[4th implementation report on the Programmes of Measures \(March 2015\)](#)

[3rd implementation report on the River Basin Management Plans \(November 2012\)](#)

[2nd implementation report on monitoring networks \(1 April 2009\)](#)

[1st implementation report on the first stage of implementation \(22 March 2007\)](#)

4th WFD implementation report was adopted on 9 March 2015 and consists of the following documents:

- **A Commission Communication:**
[The Water Framework Directive \(WFD\) and the Floods Directive \(FD\): Actions towards the 'good status' of EU water and to reduce flood risks"](#)
- **A European Overview** – 2 Commission Staff Working Documents on the [WFD Programmes of Measures](#) (including specific recommendations for each Member State as a result of the Commission's assessment) and on the [Floods Directive](#)
- **5 Assessments of the River Basin Management Plans** of [Belgium](#), [Greece](#), [Spain](#), [Portugal](#) and [Croatia](#). (Were not adopted in 2012)
- **Member State specific in-depth assessments on the WFD Programmes of Measures in the form of consultant reports:**