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How do you consider the wetlands within the Water Framework Directive?. What are the environmental objectives set by this directive in order to improve the management of wetlands?

The new Water Framework Directive is, contrary to earlier tradition, protecting our waters in a much more comprehensive way, looking at all waters, groundwater's and surface waters (rivers, lakes, coastal waters) and their interrelations. It sets environmental objectives not just for traditional chemical parameters, but for ecological quality. It is also protecting those ecosystems depending on water ("terrestrial ecosystems and wetlands directly depending on the aquatic ecosystem").

At the same time the river basin management plans under the

The new Water Framework Directive is, contrary to earlier tradition, protecting our waters in a much more comprehensive way, looking at all waters, groundwater's, surface waters and their interrelations.

Directive (1) have to respect all the specially protected areas such as Natura 2000 areas or birds protection areas; (2) have to undergo a mandatory public consultation, where all relevant issues can be and should be addressed by citizens, involved parties and NGOs. This transparency offers a lot of dynamics for the cause of environment protection.

What are the foreseen difficulties or obstacles for the implementation of these objectives?

The directive sets ambitious objectives and covers in many sectors new ground for all. An open and cooperative process involving all interested parties has been one of the reasons for the success in developing and adopting this important EU Directive. Commissioner Wallström has committed herself and the Commission services to the same open and cooperative process for the crucial phase of implementing this directive. Such cooperation will not be limited to central administrations, but also involve local and regional authorities, the scientific and research community, waters users, and last but not least environmental and consumer protection NGOs.

By using this cooperation, problems should be identified at an early stage, and solution found without delaying the achievement of environmental objective. Implementation of the directive will

be accompanied by a range of sectoral and regional workshops and seminars, and the recent WWF-EC seminar has, together with an earlier one on "Water and agriculture" set a positive example.

What is your opinion about how this directive considers the participation of the general public?

"Getting Europe's waters better protected, getting the citizens more closely involved". One of the main pillars of the Directive is a mandatory public participation, something with a long-established tradition in some regions of Europe, but with less in others. Such public participation in establishing the river basin management plans will provide citizens and NGOs, as well as all other interested and involved parties with the possibility to address in public the problems and the needs of the local and regional environment. It will, via the economic analysis, also provide transparency about the benefits of one solution or the other.

In this context, the recent WWF-EC seminar provided an interesting case study from Slovakia "The economic value of floodplains in the Danube basin: The Morava meadows". Once such benefits are

known to the citizens concerned and involved, I expect a lot of support for similar measures.

How are going to be impuled the existing financial tools and operation modes?

As a rule, EU environmental policy has to be implemented and financed by the Member States. However, a range of EU funding instruments is available and will be available to promote and support water protection objectives. All those financial instruments are linked to complying with EU environmental policy. Examples for this new approach are the LIFE Financial Instrument, Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund, but also the ISPA Fund for Candidate Countries. In parallel, the European Commission will devote budget to further developing the technical and scientific basis for selected aspects, e.g. on groundwater protection, on the cross-calibration of water quality classification etc.

What are the tools and guidelines that could be used?

Implementing the Water Framework Directive will be a major challenge. EU countries and the European Commission will identify the needs for further studies and research, but also jointly develop guideline documents on key areas of interest. Such tools and guidelines would then be available for all and support planning and implementation efforts.