

European Water Framework Directive (WFD)

Representation from municipal point of view

Ladies and gentlemen,

especially people in the rural area know to appreciate and respect water. Water is life - Water is a property, which we inherited and which we have to pass on. We must keep in mind to consider a river as a whole. It represents an entity. The water catchments, in such a way specified, is an area, that has to be regarded managed and protected as a whole.

To manage the stream network and the groundwater bodies with their different regional characteristics, does not only mean to derive it , but to provide space. It is an easy thing, to build dykes at the source of a river. We know for a long time that the downstream people have to take the water from the upstream people. For people, who live at the delta of the river, it is difficult to build dykes, which can deal with the restricting of the source and the water levels resulting from it.

Likewise the downstream people are committed, to take the water from the upstream people, but the downstream people must have a right to receive a water quality, which ensures the river habitat.

Now we may consider ourselves lucky that the national borders within Europe became more permeable also for Regulations, which take over this large responsibility. The European Water policies provide the frame for this. Now, what does that mean for the municipalities? Or better, how is the mood within the municipalities at present? From my perception cautiously, strained, in a hurry to protect the own interests. Local forums are established, to bundle the interests - primarily those of the water boards. The feared loss of possession foments concerns and fears at water suppliers, waste water boards as well as at the

regional water and ground associations, which care about the function of water body.

It is often heard,

- we are not concerned by this,
- we are not responsible,
- we delivered that task.

Substantial financial loads are feared.

The number of parameters for dischargers - from sewage purification plants and rain water channels - are substantially expanded. High standards are feared. Also it is feared that in the future the European water framework directive has impacts on urban landuse planning, which could result in restrictions regarding building on certain surfaces. It's good for sure, to consider spatial planning within the implementation process of the WFD. But the spatial planning is well advised, if it considers the complex and sensitive water systems, otherwise the water arranges the space.

Within the urban landuse planning the characteristics of rivers have to be taken into account more and more. The natural flood plains and flooding areas must better kept free from building. Rivers must have the possibility, to expand itself in extreme situations - without endangering goods and chattels, humans and animals life. The water engineers - today civil engineers for constructional hydraulic engineering - have formed a guiding principle in the past decades. We must control the water - by deriving it fast, if we do not need it and - transmit it fast, if we need it. Nature taught us in the past years that this cannot be realised unconditioned sustainable. Flood plains in contrast, are sources of life, which can contribute also to the improvement of the quality of human life at a local scale. Thus the municipalities bear a special responsibility!

We recognized that it is difficult to clean a river at the delta. Keeping the rivers clean has to be the goal and begins at the source of the river as well as at the many small sources of its tributaries, its feeder.

Not only the rivers but also the groundwater - our drinking water - has to be protected. The municipality as owner of the surface for living and habitat and

being responsible for quality of life of its inhabitants has a special interest in keeping clean the water.

For sure in this region we have sufficient drinking water supplies in our groundwater. But the areas of dense population buy already parts of their drinking water in the surrounding countryside regions.

We cannot defend our drinking water as individual municipality. Groundwater is common property, here we must co-operate inter-regionally. How can municipalities protect their drinking water? In the frame of self obligations and agreed objectives with stakeholder concerned. Pollutants, which are not supplied to the soil and waters (waste water), do not have to be removed neither.

Within wide ranges we already could improve the quality of drinking water again by water protection zones. However, that can be done only together in co-operation with other municipalities. Also by saving drinking water protects our natural resources.

What can municipalities contribute to the acceptance of the WFD? Here we can profit from the experiences of the building zoning plans in the past: information obtaining, hearing, active participation.

Thus through: Public relation, i.e., involvement of all citizens. Promote joint water politics „to understand the European water framework directive as a chance and not as a regimentation from Brussels“.

Many municipalities are involved in AGENDA 21 to stand up for the sustainable development of our society; for example: relate the local concerns, to the global aspects of climatic protection.

But here as well, the local concerns has to be connected to the European WFD, local policy the administration and the citizens has to be sensitized; people have to be encouraged to engage themselves at the local level, they have to be demonstrated, that things can change, if we seize initiative. This gives pleasure and strengthens the community feeling.

Throughout this process background information have to be provided to encourage and inspire people, to cooperate in projects and to fill by own commitment the abstract terms with life.

One instrument could be the presentation of these projects in a future workshop. Besides interested citizens, especially the representatives of agriculture, industry, trade and sewage management should be invited and involved.

If the administrative borders address themselves to the natural river courses and the water catchment areas, control and co-ordination of measures could be improved. The water management will have to be reorganized. A future structure are inter-regional river departments, which are responsible for the entire river.

From the source to the delta – regarding the requested measures the municipalities can contribute a bright piece of mosaic to the overall picture. Presupposed however is: that we succeed, to inspire people through a better information flow to engage actively at the protection of our life-supporting element - water -.

The Changed consciousness in handling the resource water is a big chance for us.

Take that chance!