

Hydropower Development under the Water Framework Directive - Statement of the Water Directors -

THE WATER DIRECTORS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, CANDIDATE AND EFTA COUNTRIES,

1. RECALL the importance of the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive, including the preservation of hydromorphological characteristics of water bodies, and the mechanisms the WFD includes to balance high levels of environmental protection with the development of economic activities that use water.
2. RECOGNISE the important role of renewable energy sources, including hydropower, for the achievement of the objective to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the EU and WELCOME ongoing discussions in the Member States on national renewable energy action plans to be developed by June 2010, according to Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources.
3. TAKE NOTE of the fact that hydropower has been identified in the 1st implementation report of the Water Framework Directive¹ as one of several drivers to hydromorphological alterations and that there is a risk that significant water systems degradation and biodiversity loss will continue in the future if infrastructure developments are implemented without taking fully into account the requirements of the Water Framework Directive.
4. STRESS that whilst the development of renewable energy, including hydropower, should be strongly supported, it is equally important that such development take place in a manner which is compatible with environmental protection requirements.
5. UNDERLINE that meeting the requirements of Article 4.7 of the Water Framework Directive is in particular relevant for cases where further exploitation of hydropower potential is envisaged by installing new facilities and a deterioration of status is to be expected.
6. RECALL the CIS guidance documents² endorsed by the Water Directors, underlining the key recommendations which should be followed in order to achieve hydropower development and ensure the environmental objectives of the Water Framework Directive are met:

¹ COM(2007) 128 final

² For points a, b and c, see the 2006 CIS Policy Paper on WFD and Hydro-morphological pressures (chapter 4.1).
http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/thematic_documents/hydromorphology&vm=detailed&sb=Title

For points d and e, see CIS Guidance Document Nr 20 on Exemptions to the Environmental Objectives. ,
http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?l=/framework_directive/guidance_documents&vm=detailed&sb=Title

- a) Pre-planning mechanisms allocating “no-go” areas for new hydro-power projects should be developed. This designation should be based on a dialogue between the different competent authorities, stakeholders and NGOs.
 - b) In order to minimize the need for new sites, the development of hydropower capacities could be supported by the modernisation and the upgrading of existing infrastructures.
 - c) The development of hydropower should be accompanied by an improvement of water ecology, through clear ecological standards for new facilities, or for existing facilities through their modernisation as well as the improvement of operation conditions. New hydropower plants should for example all have fish passages and they should respect a minimum ecological flow.
 - d) An analysis of costs and benefits of the project is necessary to enable a judgement on whether the benefits to the environment and to society preventing deterioration of status or restoring a water body to good status are outweighed by the benefits of the new modifications. This does not mean that it will be necessary to monetise or even quantify all costs and benefits to make such judgement.
 - e) The size of the project is not the relevant criteria to trigger Article 4.7. The relevant approach is to assess if a given project will result in deterioration of the status of a water body. Thus, projects of any size may fall under article 4.7.
7. SUPPORT the wide dissemination of the existing CIS guidance relevant for the integration of hydropower and protection of the aquatic environment.
8. CONFIRM their commitment to organise a CIS workshop on hydropower in 2011 to which all relevant stakeholders are invited, and which builds on the outcomes of the existing guidance, the conclusions from the 2007 workshop on WFD and Hydropower in Berlin³ and ongoing initiatives on policy integration at the international and Member State level.

³ See also

http://circa.europa.eu/Public/irc/env/wfd/library?!=/framework_directive/thematic_documents/hydromorphology&vm=detailed&sb=Title