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Assembly

## Research and Information Service Briefing Paper

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**Des McKibbin**

# EU freshwater policy

## 1 Overview

- This paper provides an overview of EU water policy since the adoption of the Water Framework Policy in 2000;
- It examines the implementation of the water framework Directive in Northern Ireland; and
- It provides an assessment of the possible policy changes made as a result of the fitness check of water policy and the forthcoming blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters.

## 2 Background

EU water policies comprise a large body of legislation covering areas as diverse as flood management, bathing-water quality, chemicals in water, clean drinking water, groundwater protection and urban waste water. The EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), adopted in 2000, was introduced to streamline the EU's water legislation into one over-arching strategy.

Ten years on from adoption of the WFD, EU water policy was chosen as a pilot area for a policy 'fitness check' to ensure it continues to be fit for purpose. This forms part of the European Commission's Smart Regulation Policy, announced in its *Work Programme for 2010*. The purpose of the fitness checks "...is to identify excessive burdens,

*overlaps, gaps, inconsistencies and/or obsolete measures which may have appeared over time*<sup>1, 2</sup>.

The results of the fitness check are due to be published this year (2012)<sup>3</sup> and will provide a building block of the *Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters*, due to be published in November 2012. The purpose of the Blueprint is to:

- Assess the implementation and achievements of current policy while identifying gaps and shortcomings; and
- Look forward at the evolving vulnerability of the water environment to identify measures and tools that may be needed in several EU policy areas in order to ensure a sustainable use of good quality water in the EU in the long term.

## 2 The Water Framework Directive

Domestic water policy and legislation sits within the framework created at European Union (EU) level. The overarching legislation is provided by the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)<sup>4</sup>, which requires member states to have an integrated approach to managing inland and coastal waters. The Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes long-term objectives for water protection in the EU, which apply to surface waters (lakes and rivers), transitional waters (estuaries), coastal waters (up to one nautical mile from land), and to ground waters (water below the surface of the ground).<sup>5</sup> The key principles within the WFD are:

- the protection and improvement of the aquatic environment and its ecosystems (WFD - Article 1);
- the organisation and regulation of water management at the level of river basins (WFD - Article 3); and
- the principle of recovery of the costs of water services (WFD - Article 9).

### 2.1 Complementary Directives

The Water Framework Directive has been complemented by measures contained in a series of subsequent laws – the so-called ‘daughter directives’.<sup>6</sup> These provide further operational guidance and additional criteria on how to achieve good chemical status:

- **The Groundwater Directive:** Under Article 17 of the Water Framework Directive, the European Commission (EC) was required to propose specific measures to

<sup>1</sup> European Commission (2010) *Commission Work Programme 2010: Time To Act* [online] available from:

<sup>2</sup> Kampa, E., Von der Weppen, J. and Farmer, A. (2012) *2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Workshop for the Fitness Check of EU Freshwater Policy*. European Commission [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vz>

<sup>3</sup> Initial Results will be presented at the 3rd European Water Conference on 24 – 25 May 2012, Brussels, see: <http://waterblueprint2012.eu/>

<sup>4</sup> 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 [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vv>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid (Articles 1&2).

<sup>6</sup> European Commission (2010) *Water is for life: How the Water Framework Directive helps safeguard Europe's resources*

prevent and control groundwater pollution and achieve good groundwater chemical status. These measures include criteria for assessing the chemical status of groundwater and for identifying trends in pollution of groundwater bodies. In order to fulfil the requirement, the Commission adopted the Directive on the Protection of Groundwater against Pollution and Deterioration on 22 November 2006.

- **The Environmental Quality Standards Directive:** Article 16(7) of the Water Framework Directive required the establishment of environmental quality standards applicable to water. Since 2008, this Directive has limited concentrations in surface waters of 33 priority substances and eight other pollutants.
- **The Floods Directive (FD)** (2007/60/EC) is a sister Directive of the WFD. It expands the scope of the framework of European Water Policy towards flood risk management. The directive is strongly linked to the WFD implementation process, as flood risks management plans should be coordinated with River Basin Management Plans (RBMPS) and reviews are based on the same six year cycle of planning.
- There are two key Directives adopted before the WFD which address key sources of pollution - waste water, agriculture and major industries: The **Urban Waste Water Treatment (UWWTD)**, and the **Nitrates Directive (NiD)**. These are linked to the Water Framework Directive in that implementation should be mutually supportive, but implementation cycles are not synchronised and the Water Framework Directive does not directly change the obligations of these Directives.

### 3 Implementing the WFD

The WFD requires Member States to assess environmental pressures on river basins, to set targets for improving the status of water bodies, and to create and implement management plans with measures to achieve these targets.

The key criterion for judging performance is the achievement of 'good ecological status' by 2015.<sup>7</sup> Member States can seek exemptions from the objective of reaching good ecological and chemical status of surface water and good quantitative and chemical status of groundwater by 2015, if they meet defined criteria, including:

- unreasonable cost implications of reaching 'good status';
- technical feasibility;
- unfavourable natural conditions that require more time; or
- designation of heavily modified water bodies (HMWBs) such as canals and reservoirs, which only need to achieve good ecological potential, instead of good ecological status.<sup>8</sup>

These exemptions, or derogations as they are known mean that the achievement of 'good status' can be delayed until 2021 or 2027.

<sup>7</sup> Waters will be classified into five classes, being: 'high', 'good', 'fair', 'poor' and 'bad'. Annex V <http://nia1.me/vv>

<sup>8</sup> Annex V, Directive 2000/60/EC [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vv>

The WFD has a series of key milestones for delivery, these are listed in Table one (below). After the Directive came into force (2000), Member States had to define their river basin districts geographically, and identify the authorities responsible for water management (2003). The next task was to undertake a joint economic and environmental analysis of these areas' characteristics (2004), and to identify water bodies at risk of not achieving the 2015 target. By 2006, countries had to launch water monitoring networks.

**Table 1: Timetable for the implementation of the Water Framework Directive<sup>9</sup>**

Year	Issue	Reference
2000	Directive entered into force	Art. 25
2003	Transposition in national legislation	Art. 23
	Identification of River Basin Districts and Authorities	Art. 3
2004	Characterisation of river basin: pressures, impacts and economic analysis	Art. 5
2006	Establishment of monitoring network	Art. 8
	Start public consultation (at the latest)	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

In 2007, in the first WFD implementation report the Commission issued its first assessment of progress in implementing the Directive. It looked at the way Member States transposed the WFD into national law, the administrative arrangements, and the river basin district analyses. In 2009, a second WFD implementation report assessed progress on establishing monitoring networks.

The 22 December 2009 was a key milestone regarding the WFD, as it was the deadline for Member States to draw up their river basin management plans (RBMPs). Each plan had to include a 'programme of measures' (PoM) to meet the WFD's objectives. This process will be repeated on a cyclical basis, whereby RBMPs are

<sup>9</sup> European Commission [online] *WFD: Timetable for implementation*. Available from: <http://nia1.me/vt>

prepared, implemented and reviewed every six years; the first cycle covers the period 2009-2015.

Article 9 of the Water Framework Directive required Member States to ensure that water-pricing policies provide adequate incentives to use water resources efficiently by 2010 and that the price charged to water customers reflects the true costs. The Directive allowed member states to take into account social and economic considerations when establishing the level of cost recovery for different users. While the Directive requires an adequate recovery of the costs of water and sewerage services for each economic sector (households, industry and agriculture), it allows flexibility as to how the recovery of those costs are distributed within the economic sector.

## 2.2 Monitoring

The European Commission has to assess progress in the implementation of the WFD in certain intervals and to inform the European Parliament, the Council and the public about the results of its assessments (see Article 18 WFD). The first implementation report on the first stage of implementation was published in 2007, and the second implementation report on monitoring networks was published in 2009.<sup>10</sup>

The Commission is preparing the third and most significant report on the implementation of the WFD which is due to be published in 2012 (as required by article 18 of the Directive). This review will focus on Member States achievements of key milestones since the last report, including:

- How Member States have gone about preparing their RBMPs; and
- How Member States have implemented water pricing policies.

**The Commission's 3rd report on the implementation of the WFD will be an integral part of the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Water Resources to be published in November 2012.**

## 4 The WFD in Northern Ireland

The WFD was transposed into Northern Ireland law through The Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003 (Statutory Rule 2003 No. 544).

This identified the Department of the Environment (and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency) as the responsible authority for co-ordinating the river basin planning process. Northern Ireland has four River Basin Districts, three of which are managed in close co-operation with the Republic of Ireland.<sup>11</sup> This is common across

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<sup>10</sup> European Commission [online] WFD Implementation Reports, available from: <http://nia1.me/w1>

<sup>11</sup> DoE [2008] *River Basement Management Planning* [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vw>

the EU where many river basin districts are shared by Member States; Cross-border districts are referred to as International River Basin Districts (IRBD).

The WFD requires Member States to coordinate their efforts in managing IRBD with the aim of producing a single management plan covering the entire district. On the island of Ireland, a total of eight river basin districts have been identified. One of these is entirely in Northern Ireland, four are entirely in Ireland and three are international river basin districts.

Figure one shows the three IRBDs and the one wholly contained river basin district in Northern Ireland:

- The North Eastern River Basin District is the only one contained wholly within Northern Ireland;
- the North Western International River Basin District, including the Erne and Foyle river basins, together with the basins of Lough Melvin, Bradoge River, Lough Swilly and related small coastal river basins in west County Donegal;
- the Neagh Bann International River Basin District, including the Lough Neagh and River Bann basins as well as river basins draining to the outer estuarine limits of Dundalk Bay (Rivers Fane, Castletown, Glyde, Dee, Cully Water, Kilcurry, Ballymascanlan and Flurry) and Carlingford Lough (Newry River);
- the Shannon International River Basin District, including the Shannon river basin, which drains the midlands of Ireland and also a small portion of County Fermanagh in Northern Ireland, together with small coastal river basins in Counties Clare and Kerry. Only a very small portion of this International River Basin District lies in Northern Ireland. Consequently the preparation of the plan for the Shannon International River Basin District has been led by the authorities in the Republic of Ireland. Full consultation has been maintained with the authorities in Northern Ireland, who are represented on the Steering Group for the Shannon International River Basin District.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4.1 Northern Ireland River Basement Management Plans

River Basement Management Plans (RBMP) set out the actions required within each district to achieve agreed environmental objectives. This process requires a gap analysis whereby every water body (surface and groundwater) is assessed for differences in its current state and where it has to get to in order to achieve 'good status'. A programme of measures can then be identified and put in place to achieve the desired goals.

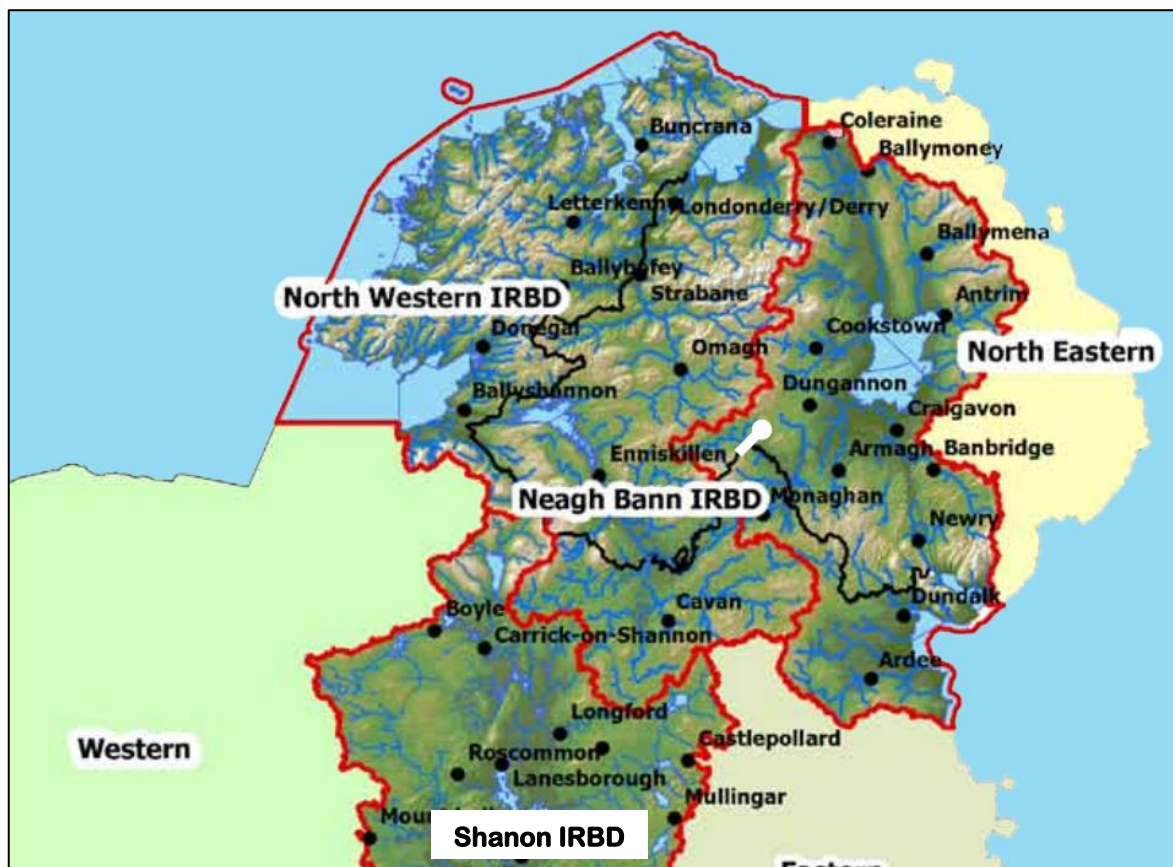
As discussed previously (section 3) the achievement of 'good status' is the measure by which Member States are assessed in terms of their compliance with the WFD. Each of

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<sup>12</sup> North Western IRBD (2009) *River Basin Management Plan 2009 – 2015* [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vx>

Northern Ireland's three RBMPs detail the current status of Northern Ireland water and identify where it will be (or aim to be) at 2015, 2021 and 2027.

**Figure 1: River Basin Districts in Northern Ireland**



#### 4.1.1 North Western River Basin Management Plan (NWRBMP)

The North Western River Basin District covers an area of around 4900 km<sup>2</sup>. It takes in large parts of County Fermanagh, County Londonderry and County Tyrone. The area is very mountainous, with the Sperrins in the east, and this terrain contributes to the low average population density in the District. Most of the urban areas are located beside rivers. In rural areas, many people live in small villages or single dwellings. Within the North Western River Basin District there are 209 river water bodies; 9 lake water bodies; 1 coastal water body; 2 transitional water bodies; 45 groundwater bodies; and 15 heavily modified water bodies<sup>13</sup>

The NWRBMP, classification results indicate that:

- 30% of waters in the North Western District are at good status or better;
- 63 % are classified as less than good status;
- the remaining 7% are classified as moderate ecological potential or worse; and

<sup>13</sup> NIEA (2009) *NORTH WESTERN River Basin Management Plan Summary*[online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w7>

- All 45 groundwater bodies in the North Western District are classified as good status.<sup>14</sup>

The NWRBMP has applied for derogations under the criteria identified. As such it has set objectives to be achieved at each 6 year cycle until 2027:

- By 2015 147 out of 221 surface water bodies (67%) will achieve 'good status';
- good ecological potential or better will be reached in 5 of its heavily modified water bodies (2%);
- 100% of groundwater bodies at good status will be maintained;
- 69 surface water bodies have been identified where it will be more feasible and cost-effective to implement actions over a longer period of time than 2015;
- by 2021, the Foyle coastal water body will achieve good ecological potential;
- 90% of water bodies will be at 'good status'; and
- by 2027, almost all water bodies will be meeting good status, the exceptions will be 8 river water bodies in the Owenkillev, Swanlinbar, Tempo, Owenreagh and Waterfoot River systems, where pearl mussel colonies will need more time to achieve self-sustaining populations.<sup>15</sup>

#### 4.1.2 North Eastern River Basin Management Plan (NERBMP)

The North Eastern River Basin District has a land area of just over 3000km<sup>2</sup>, with a further 1000km<sup>2</sup> of marine waters. It takes in large parts of Counties Antrim and Down and a small portion of County Londonderry. The district is flanked by the Antrim Plateau and Glens of Antrim to the north and the Mourne Mountains to the south.

Over 0.7 million people live in the District which includes the most densely populated region of Northern Ireland, the Belfast Metropolitan Area, and surrounding commuter areas. Most of the main urban areas are located beside rivers or on the coast. In rural areas, many people live in small villages or single dwellings.

Within the North Eastern River Basin District there are: 111 river water bodies; 3 lake water bodies; 16 coastal water bodies; 3 transitional water bodies; 8 groundwater bodies; and 25 heavily modified water bodies

The NERBMP classification results indicate:

- 16% of waters in the North Eastern District are at good status or better;
- 65% are classified as less than good status;
- 2% are classified as good ecological potential or better; and
- the remaining 17% are at moderate ecological potential or worse.

<sup>14</sup> NIEA (2009) NORTH WESTERN River Basin Management Plan Summary[online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w7> (pages 24&25)

<sup>15</sup> NIEA (2009) NORTH WESTERN River Basin Management Plan Summary[online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w7> (page 32)



- 7 groundwater bodies (88%) are classified as good for chemical quality and water quantity, 1 is poor.

The NERBMP has applied for derogations under the criteria identified. As such it has set objectives to be achieved at each 6 year cycle until 2027:

- By 2015 reach good status, or better, in 61 out of 133 of surface water bodies (46%);
- Reach good ecological potential or better in 4 heavily modified water bodies (3%).
- 7 out of 8 of groundwater bodies (88%) will be maintained at good status.
- 68 surface water bodies and 1 groundwater body have been identified where it will be more feasible and cost-effective to implement actions over a longer period of time than
- by 2027, all objectives will be achieved<sup>16</sup>

#### 4.1.3 Neagh Bann River Basin Management Plan (NBRBMP)

The Neagh Bann River Basin District covers an area of around 5740 km<sup>2</sup>. It takes in all of County Armagh, large parts of Counties Antrim, Londonderry, Down and Tyrone, and a small area of County Fermanagh. The waters of the Neagh Bann area support fishing and boating, and the wetlands around Lough Neagh.

Within the Neagh Bann river basin district there are 255 river water bodies; 10 lakes; 3 coastal water bodies; 2 transitional water bodies; 14 groundwater bodies; and 35 heavily modified water bodies.

The NBRBMP, the classification results indicate:

- 39 out of 270 surface water bodies (14%) and 13 out of 14 groundwater bodies (93%) are already achieving the standards required for good status or higher.
- One heavily modified water body (0.4%) has been classified as being at good ecological potential or better.

The NBRBMP has applied for derogations under the criteria identified. As such it has set objectives to be achieved at each 6 year cycle until 2027:

- By 2015 117 out of 270 of our surface water bodies will have reached good status (43%),
- 9 heavily modified water bodies (3%) will have reached good ecological potential or better.
- 13 out of 14 groundwater bodies (93%) will be maintained at good status.

144 surface water bodies and 1 groundwater body where it will be more technically feasible and cost-effective to implement actions over a longer period of time than 2015.

- By 2027, almost all water bodies will be meeting good status. The exceptions will be

<sup>16</sup> NIEA (2009) NORTH Eastern River Basin Management Plan Summary [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w8>

4 river water bodies in the Ballinderry River system, where pearl mussel colonies will need more time to achieve self-sustaining populations.<sup>17</sup>

## 4.2 Overview of NI compliance with WFD

The Commission report on the implementation of the WFD is due to be published in 2012. This report will show that the NIEA has successfully produced river basement management plans for the river basins within its jurisdiction. The three plans show that the condition of Northern Ireland ground water is generally at the required 'good status' and this will be maintained. However, each district has a significant distance to go to achieve good status in all surface water and failure to reach these targets could ultimately lead to infraction proceedings.

### 4.2.1 Water pricing

The latest review of the WFD will also assess how member states have implemented their pricing policies. The WFD requires that a "fair price" for water is created as pricing acts as an incentive for the long-term sustainable use of water resources. Furthermore, a key principle of the Directive is that the polluter should pay.

Article 9 of the Directive provides the detail regarding the recovery of costs. It states that:

*"Given the polluter pays principle...Member States shall ensure by 2010,*

- That water-pricing policies provide adequate incentives for users to use water resources efficiently, and therefore contribute to the environmental objectives of this Directive; and*
- An adequate contribution of the different water uses, disaggregated into at least industry, households and agriculture, for the recovery of costs of water services."*

Analysis of the Directive would suggest that it is questionable whether the current water pricing structure in Northern Ireland is fully compliant with the WFD. This however, is certainly not clear cut and the Directive is open to interpretation. A common criticism of this policy has been that the principle of cost-recovery has not been sufficiently defined.<sup>18</sup>

Advice published by the EU states that in order to achieve environmental aims, water pricing policies must reflect financial, environmental and resource costs. It also states that each user must bear the cost of water and prices must be linked to the amount of water consumed and/or pollution produced. The Directive does not however state the level at which these policies must be adopted.

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<sup>17</sup> NIEA (2009) NEAGH BANN River Basin Management Plan Summary [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w9>

<sup>18</sup> Volket, A., Geeraerts, K and Farmer, A. (2011) European Commission – General Directorate Environment Support to Fitness Check Water Policy. European Commission and Deloitte [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vu>

It would be reasonable to assume that the ambiguity which exists around this particular policy will be addressed by the fitness check. Currently Member States enjoy considerable autonomy and flexibility with regard to issues such as adequate pricing of water use.

While it is clear from the policy that 100% of cost recovery is not required, it is equally clear that transparency is required around current cost recovery rates. This is currently not the case in Northern Ireland as there is considerable uncertainty around the level of contribution made through the regional rate.

Most countries have incentive pricing policies in place, i.e. users are billed directly and therefore know they are paying for water although the amount they pay does not reflect the full cost of the service.<sup>19</sup>

## 5 Fitness Checks

A fitness check is a new method introduced in the context of the Smart Regulation agenda to check if EU laws meet their objectives in an efficient and consistent way. It will be applied in specific policy areas to assess if there are gaps, inconsistencies or difficulties in the implementation and if an adaptation or a revision of the laws is needed. As stated in the Work Programme for 2010 the fitness checks aim:

*"to keep current regulation fit for purpose [...] The purpose is to identify excessive burdens, overlaps, gaps, inconsistencies and/or obsolete measures which may have appeared over time. Pilot exercises will start in 2010 in four areas: environment, transport, employment and social policy, and industrial policy."*<sup>20</sup>

### 5.1 Fresh water policy fitness check

In the area of environment, the protection of EU freshwater resources was selected as the pilot area.

The fitness check of freshwater policy has been assessing:

- any barriers (including in other policy areas) to meeting the already agreed objectives;
- issues related to implementation and measures that could improve implementation;
- coherence of the legislation in place and whether there are any overlaps, inconsistencies and/or obsolete measures.

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<sup>19</sup> Volket, A., Geeraerts, K and Farmer, A. (2011) European Commission – General Directorate Environment Support to Fitness Check Water Policy. European Commission and Deloitte [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vu>

<sup>20</sup> European Commission (2010) Commission Work Programme 2010: Time To Act [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/w6>

According to the Commission, this fitness check of EU Freshwater policy aims to: “...identify what works and what does not work - and where things do not work sufficiently well, about suggesting improvements.”<sup>21</sup>

The scope of the Fitness Check includes:

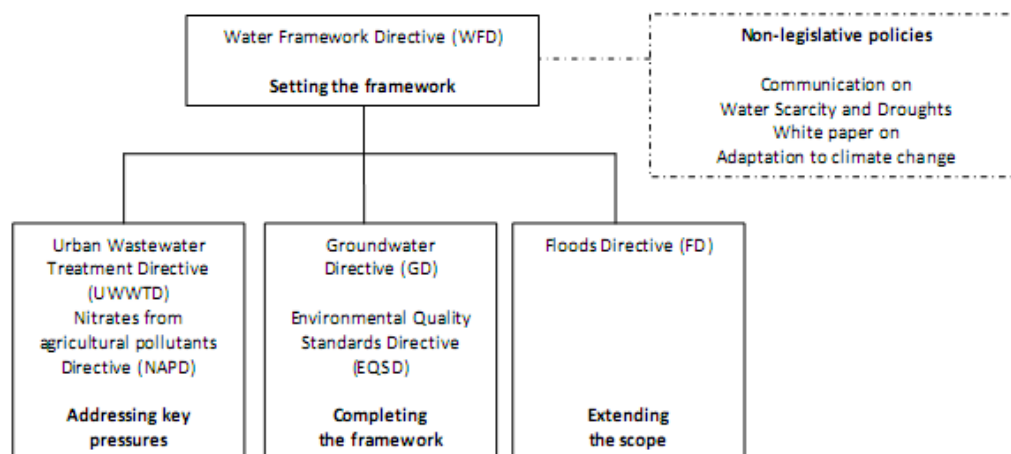
- 1) the [Water Framework Directive](#),
- 2) the [Groundwater Directive](#),
- 3) the [Directive on Environmental Quality Standards \(EQS\)](#),
- 4) the [Urban Waste Water Directive](#),
- 5) the [Nitrates Directive](#) and
- 6) the [Floods Directive](#).

The Fitness Check will also look at water management issues for which there is currently no legislation at the EU level (except for Floods), namely:

- The Communication on water scarcity and drought (COM (2007) 414) and its annual follow-up report,
- The Commission staff working document accompanying the White paper "Adapting to climate change: towards a European framework for action" on Climate Change; and
- Water, Coasts and Marine Issues (SEC (2009) 386).

The scope of the fitness check is presented in figure 2.

**Figure 2: The Policy Framework covered by the Fitness Check of EU Water Policy** <sup>22</sup>



Source: Volkery et al. (2011)

<sup>21</sup> European Commission [online] Fitness Check of EU Water Policy. Available from: <http://nia1.me/w5>

<sup>22</sup> Volkery, A., Geeraerts, K. and Farmer, A. (2011) *European Commission – General Directorate Environment Support to Fitness Check Water Policy*. Deloitte Consulting [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/vu>

## 6 Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters

A public consultation for the Blueprint to Safeguard Europe's Waters has been launched by the European Commission. The Blueprint will provide a revision on EU water policy based on assessments of how policies relevant to the water environment are implemented. It will identify gaps and limitations which are preventing the achievement of policy goals, notably the availability of good quality water for sustainable and equitable water use in line with WFD.

The Blueprint will cover three main aspects:

- The implementation of current EU water policy;
- The integration of water and other policies' objectives;
- The completion of the current policy framework, relating to water quantity, efficiency and climate adaptation.

The focus on implantation is based on the conclusion that the current water legislative framework is both sufficient and not coherent. However, there are fundamental weaknesses in the implementation of the current water legislation as well as conflicts between water policy and other EU policies' objectives.<sup>23</sup>

The Blueprint will thus address implementation issues, the integration of water and other policies' objectives as well as the gaps in the current EU policy framework. The Blueprint will also strengthen links between EU water policy and the EU2020 Strategy, including the Roadmap to a Resource-Efficient Europe, and more generally improve the coherence between EU water policy and other policy areas.<sup>24</sup>

The Blueprint will be based on information from a number of key sources, including:

1. The assessment of the [River Basin Management Plans delivered by the Member States under the Water Framework Directive](#);
2. The review of the [EU action on Water Scarcity and Drought](#);
3. The assessment of the [vulnerability of water resources to climate change and other man made pressures](#) and;
4. The [Fitness Check](#) which will address the whole EU water policy in the framework of the Commission's Smart Regulation approach.

The Blueprint will seek to take action across seven distinct areas:

- 1) Land management** – The Blueprint will seek to promote sustainable land use and green infrastructure for the protection of waterways. This will be achieved through integration with existing policies such as CAP and Cohesion funding

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<sup>23</sup> European Commission (2012) Policy Options for the Blueprint to safeguard Europe's waters [online] available from: <http://nia1.me/wc>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

which have the potential to enable economic incentives to be offered for water and biodiversity protection.

- 2) **Cost recovery** - The Blueprint will seek to facilitate the recovery of environmental costs through the application of a portfolio of economic and communication instruments. This could include updated requirements around water pricing.
- 3) **Water efficiency** – The blueprint will seek to set up measures through which Member States will be able to quantify how much water flows in and out of water basins. This will allow for the development of targets for water efficiency (and quality improvement) in the Member States at sectoral and river basin level. In addition, it will look at ways to improve the water efficiency both in buildings and in distribution networks.
- 4) **Innovative water resource management** – The Blueprint will identify the main financial, technological, organisational and sociological barriers to innovation in the area of water resource management, and ways to overcome them.
- 5) **Governance** – The Blueprint will look at ways to improve the governance system stemming from EU water policy, including the administrative setup and the potential to reduce the administrative burden, while providing the reactive capacity needed to face emerging challenges such as climate change adaptation.
- 6) **Knowledge** – The Blueprint will develop options to improve the quality of the knowledge base for water policy making. These could include:
  - an improvement of the statistical information on pressures of economic activity on water resources;
  - increased use of satellite and land GMES observations to monitor status and pressures;
  - enhancing the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) to include policy relevant indicators;
  - developing a roadmap for water research under the next Framework Programme.
- 7) Finally, the Blueprint will also recognise the global aspects of water policy and reinforce the EU's commitment to achieve the **Millennium Development Goals** (MDGs) on access to drinking water and sanitation while taking into account relevant outcomes of the Rio+20 Conference that will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, on June 20-22, 2012..<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> European Commission [online] A Blueprint to safeguard Europe's Waters. Available from: <http://nia1.me/w4>