

OECD INITIATIVE ON WATER GOVERNANCE

WG 3 on Basin Governance

Version: 02 December 2014
Draft for Working Group consultation

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Key messages and Draft principles on Basin Governance

The following draft principles are an input to OECD Principles on Water Governance, which will include other dimensions of governance, such as multi-level coordination, policy coherence, governance and performance of water services, information, integrity and transparency, as well as stakeholder engagement. These Principles will be designed to fit in a consolidated OECD Policy Guidance on water. This draft will evolve in an iterative way over the coming months, including several thematic and regional consultations across OECD members and non- member states and through the partnerships and network linked to Working Group n°3, and at the 7th World Water Forum (Korea, April 2015).

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“This document sets out the insights and views expressed by the participants in the WG3. It is not a negotiated document, but rather a reflection of the broad perspectives and thinking of the participants that does not necessarily represent country or institutional positions or consensus on each and every issue” .

WG 3 on Basin Governance is animated by:



Key messages on Basin Governance

The Problem we face:

- Water resources are very diverse and it is vital to adopt an appropriate institutional framework for managing them at basin scale. Surface water resources range from large perennial rivers and lakes to ephemeral watercourses which are dry for many years between rainfall events. Groundwater resources range from shallow renewable resources highly connected with overlying rivers to deep confined nonrenewable resources. The timescale of impacts of groundwater pumping on surface water vary between days to decades. The main surface water quality problems arise from human pollution whereas salinity poses the main threat to groundwater quality. Therefore it is essential to understand the characteristics of basin water resources and their use impacts and surface water and aquifer dynamics in order to make the best use of the complementary properties of different resources and to manage impacts of their uses.
- Surface and ground waters have to be managed according to hydrological boundaries, that is to say, based on river or lake basin units or aquifer system basins, while taking into account also political and administrative boundaries. Mismatches between these boundaries need to be reconciled within a system of multilevel basin governance.
- That is particularly true and crucial for the transboundary rivers, lakes and aquifers, crossing the boundaries of several riparian countries, which finally use and impact the same basin water resources.
- To be efficient, this basin management (transboundary and national) has to be carried on by a governing framework of arrangements, laws, rules or management plans at appropriate level. This governing framework must facilitate with specific basin institutions and if possible stakeholder participation, the development of a basin strategy, long term basin management arrangements and action programs, using financial instruments and water information system. In the particular case of transboundary basins, these institutions set up with the full agreement of the riparian countries have to facilitate the cooperation among the riparian countries, the emergence and implementation of common strategy addressing water uses and water protection from upstream to downstream, based on the political will of the relevant national governments.
- According to the context, the basin organisations can take various forms, but the more important thing is to get well-defined organizations, roles and responsibilities, with clear mandates, and sufficient human and financial resources to ensure effective water resource management at basin level and to facilitate the implementation of concerted water policy.

A lack of basin organizations and weakness of many existing basin institutions

- Today, on 276 transboundary rivers and lake basins and 274 transboundary aquifers in the world, the number of qualified transboundary basin organisations capable of managing transboundary basins is still very low.
- The basin management approach is too often not well developed at national level; when basin management exists, there are in some countries deficiencies in the organization, in governance, in the resources allocated and shortfalls in means and capacities.
- Moreover, many times, the basin organizations (national or transboundary), whatever their type (commission, agency, state body, ...) have difficulties to put in place critical tools such as water information system, sustainable financial system, and to find the way for a real integrated water resource management, including a system for managing together surface and ground waters.
- In addition, there is a crucial and urgent need of indicators to measure the quality of the water governance in the basin organizations.
- These requirements appear more and more important as we move forward to the inevitable climate change in the world and that its impacts are more accurate.

Towards a Solution: The solutions are going through four actions

1. Development of a governing frameworks of arrangements, laws, rules, transboundary agreements, or management plans as instruments for water governance,
2. Increasing of the number of countries with water security diagnoses and governance tools, based on existing (local, basin, national, international) regulatory and legislative frameworks and IRBM mechanisms,
3. Increasing the number of basin governing institutions at transboundary scale, capable of ensuring sustainable management of water resources,
4. Development of an appropriate framework for contextual assessment of water resources, users and impacts of uses and indicators of water governance at basin scale, starting with baseline / inventory of the sources of information in the basin and the relevant countries

Draft Principles of Basin Governance

1. A legislative framework identifying clearly the mandate for the basin governing institutions and consistent with the national policy(ies)
2. Contextual assessment of basin surface water and groundwater resources, users, interactions and impacts of water resource use starting with baseline/inventory of the sources of information in the basin and the relevant riparian countries
3. A process for developing and implementing long term multilevel basin management arrangements that takes account of the diversity of water resources, users and their interactions, opportunities for conjunctive water resources management and the impacts of surface water and groundwater use on other resources and the environment.
4. For transboundary basins, well established and coordinated Basin organisations, based on political willingness of the relevant riparian country governments,
5. Whatever the scale and the type of basin organisation,, a technical / administrative body with enough means ...
6. A sustainable system for financing the water management at basin level, based on key principles such as water pays water, user pays, polluter pays
7. An efficient water information system, established at basin level and a monitoring system to measure progress in achieving good water governance
8. A basin committee/commission with an official participation of all relevant stakeholders through transparent processes and good efficiency
9. Effective means of coordination between multilevel institutions and organizations.
10. Reliable monitoring and reporting mechanisms
11. A communication system towards the civil society