



*EU Environmental Policy Briefing\**

**First Commission Report on Implementation of the Water Framework Directive**

30 March 2007

The European Commission has published its first report (COM(2007)128)<sup>1</sup> on the implementation of the 2000 Water Framework Directive (WFD; 2000/60/EC). The report is a short (13 page) document summarising the results of reports made by the Member States under Article 5 of the Directive. It is, however, accompanied by a more detail Staff Working Document<sup>2</sup> which examples issues further.

Article 5 of the WFD requires Member States to produce an environmental and economic analysis of water bodies by 2004 and report on this to the Commission. The 2007 Commission report is based on these reports. A key question that Member States had to address was ‘what is the risk of failing to meet WFD environmental objectives based on current data?’

The striking feature of the report is the number of water bodies which are reported to be ‘at risk’. There are still many data gaps, but only three of the 27 Member States reported that the majority of water bodies are not at risk. There are a number of reasons for this, including agricultural and point source pollution and over abstraction. In some cases improvements are in the pipe-line (such as implementation of urban waste water treatment in the new Member States). In many cases, however, there will need to be considerable efforts in developing programmes of measures within the river basin management plans.

The transposition of the WFD by the EU15 (December 2003 deadline) was poorly met, although the new Member States had progressed well by the date of accession in 2004. A common feature is a failure to address requirements related to access to environmental justice. Other areas of deficiency are environmental and economic assessment tools. Water pricing is also a major problem area. In many cases prices were not reported, and when they were, prices tended to be lower in agriculture compared with other sectors.

***Priority substances***

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On a separate development, the European Parliament Environment Committee on 27 March 2007 debated the proposed Directive on hazardous substances (COM(2006)0397), which forms a daughter Directive of the water framework Directive. The Commission proposal included standards for 33 substances, 12 of which are classed as 'priority hazardous substances'. The Committee wants to add 28 substances to that priority hazardous list (such as the pesticide glyphosate). This development is likely to cause a disagreement with the Council as the proposal proceeds.

### *References*

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2. SEC(2007) 362. 22.3.2007. Commission Staff Working Document. Accompanying Document to COM(2007) 128.  
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