

Launching stakeholders' information and consultation process in the preparation of River Basin Management Plans in Slovenia: approaches, methods and experiences

Lucija Marovt, Consensus, Communications for a Responsible Society, Ljubljana, Slovenia; Aleš Bizjak, Ph.D., Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia



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BACKGROUND

According to the national Water Act of the Republic of Slovenia, Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia (IZVRS) is appointed a leading expert institution to develop content proposals in the preparation of River Basin Management Plans on the expert level. IZVRS is not obliged to develop formal information and consultation process with stakeholders, but according to its previous experiences in this field, providing sufficient content and proposals on expert level without any consultation with stakeholders would not meet the principles and goals of integrated water management and particularly European Water Framework Directive in later stages. The process of stakeholders' consultation on the expert level within the preparation of River Basin Management Plans in Slovenia was launched in 2007 with the purpose to further upgrade and develop it in 2008 and 2009.

CHALLENGES TO LAUNCH THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

There were many obstacles and challenges faced when planning the information and consultation process:

a. Limited experiences in information and consultation process with stakeholders:

- Limited experiences in information, consultation and active involvement of stakeholders from the perspective of integrated water management approach.
- Insufficient participative culture and a lack of dialogue on sustainable management issues among stakeholders and general public.
- A need to intense background information to raise awareness and knowledge about stakeholders' role in the process and the content to be discussed.

b. Development of integrated water management content and river basin management plans:

- Lack of holistic approach in water management.
- Surface water and groundwater studied separately by two expert institutions.
- An integrated water management approach not considered by other sectors that impact water quality.

c. Cooperation among two expert institutions:

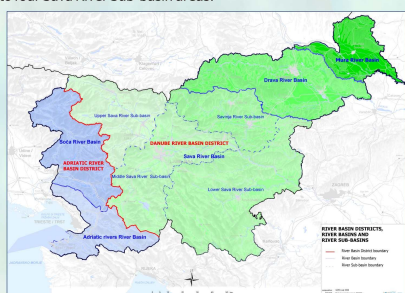
- Surface waters appointed to IZVRS, ground waters appointed to the Geological Survey of the Republic of Slovenia (GeoZS). No systematic data, information or knowledge transfer among institutions had been established so far.
- Cooperation started intensively in 2007 to prepare one common information and consultation process for surface waters and ground waters in different river basins.

RIVER BASIN DISTRICTS, RIVER BASINS AND RIVER SUB-BASINS

Slovenian territory is divided in two River Basin Districts containing five River Basins:

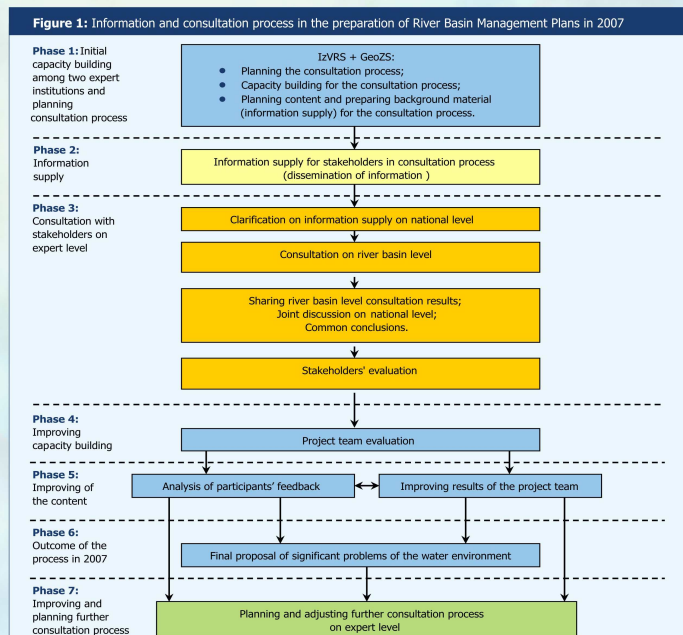
- the Danube River Basin District subdivided into the Sava, Drava and Mura River Basins (covering app. 80 % of national territory), and
- the Adriatic Sea River Basin District subdivided into the Soča River Basin and the Adriatic River Basin (covering app. 20 % of national territory).

Since River Basin Districts are geographically, orographically, meteorologically, hydrologically and culturally highly heterogeneous, Slovenian territory has been divided into eight areas to perform optimal and effective consultation with stakeholders: for each of the five river basins, where the Sava River Basin has been additionally divided into four Sava River Sub-basin areas.



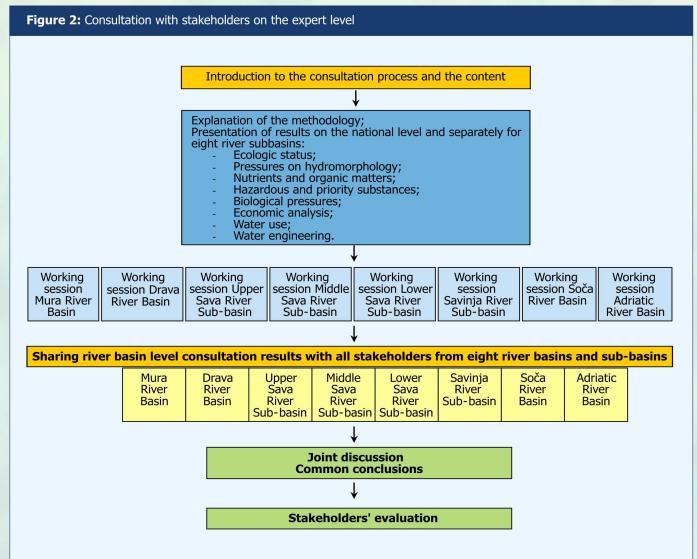
STEP-BY-STEP APPROACH TO STAKEHOLDERS' CONSULTATION

To cross the limits of single-sector approach and start addressing increasingly complex issues and face all challenges, institutions planned a step-by-step approach to stakeholders' consultation consisting of seven phases:



CONSULTATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS ON EXPERT LEVEL

The main consultation activity on the expert level in the 2007 was a workshop entitled 'Problematics of the Water Environment of River Basins and Sub-basins in Slovenia'. Even though organized on the national level, stakeholders from all river basins and river sub-basins were invited to actively cooperate in eight working sessions that were focused to analyze problematics in each river basin and sub-basin.



GOALS ACHIEVED

Stakeholders' feedback on the content and results of evaluation showed that expert institutions successfully overcame obstacles and challenges and achieved main goals:

- Stakeholders on expert level were introduced into the content and the process of the preparation of River Basin Management Plan (RBMP);
- Stakeholders have been acquainted with the current state of the preparation of RBMP;
- Stakeholders on expert level have been consulted about problematics in water environment;
- Methods of work and results of work of two expert institution were presented and checked by stakeholders from local (river basin and river sub-basin level);
- Information and data for surface waters and ground waters prepared by two expert institutions were updated and improved according to stakeholders' consultation;
- Expert institutions paved the way for establishing a network of stakeholders from local (river basin and river sub-basin) level to consult current and further issues;
- Face-to-face consultation methods approved the possibility and preparedness of stakeholders to cooperate in further process;
- Stakeholders' evaluation showed their approval and acceptance of methods, content and the organization of consultation activities.

CONSULTATION PROCESS IN 2008 AND 2009

As basic approach and methods showed as right and effective in 2007, consultation process in eight river basins and sub-basins is being continued by both expert institutions in 2008 based on following viewpoints:

- To regularly inform and consult stakeholders from each river basin and sub-basin that were consulted in 2007 in further process and its progress;
- To raise awareness of the importance of water management on the river basin district level and further on river basin and river sub-basins;
- To continue and improve information and knowledge sharing on water planning process and river basin management plans among stakeholders from different expert fields in each river basin and sub-basin; and
- To manage stakeholders' expectations.

On national level in 2008, more attention is given to information process to raise awareness on river basin management process and its content among different expert stakeholders. Consultation process and activities are even more intensively focused to specific questions and issues separately in each river basin and sub-basin on the content as well as on organizational perspectives:

- Data is analyzed for each water-body in each of eight river basin and sub-basins;
- Consultation process with stakeholders is being performed separately in each of eight river basins and sub-basins;
- Consultation activities are followed up by additional information supply, based on outcomes and main findings in each river basin;
- At the end of 2008, outcomes and findings for two River Basin Districts will be presented to stakeholders involved in separate consultation activities in each river basin and sub-basin.

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