



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Commission for
the Environment,
Climate Change and Energy**

ENVE

Integrated water management and policy coherence in regions and cities



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List of abbreviations

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CoR	European Committee of the Regions
ECJ	European Court of Justice
EQS	Environmental Quality Standards
FRMP	Flood Risk Management Plan
LRAs	Local and Regional Authorities
OOAO	One Out All Out Principle
RBD	River Basin District
RBMP	River Basin Management Plan
REACH	Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (EC 1907/2006)
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UN	United Nations
UoM	Unit of Management
UWWTD	Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (Directive 91/271/EEC)
WFD	Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)

Part I: Executive Summary and Introduction

Executive summary

In late 2019 the European Commission published its Fitness Check for the Water Framework Directive, the Floods Directive, and the daughter Directives. The Fitness Check concluded that these Directives are ‘largely fit for purpose’, identifying areas that are working well and areas for improvement.

This report uses the publicly available information from the Fitness Check, together with background literature, interviews and other stakeholder inputs to review the inputs and positions of Local and Regional Authorities (LRAs) concerning the Fitness Check. As the report is based on information available during a short preparation period, it does not present a comprehensive overview of LRA positions.

In terms of the effectiveness of the Directives, LRAs highlighted achievements including improved water governance, the establishment a common approach across the EU, and stronger coordination among levels of government. They noted that the Directives have led to investments for water infrastructure and flood protection and have brought some improvement in water quality. The inputs from the LRAs also identified issues including the so-called One Out All Out principle, which can mask improvements in water quality, approaches for waste water treatment (often a local competence) and more generally a need to strengthen implementation of the Directives.

Regarding efficiency, LRAs noted that the Directives created administrative costs for new governance mechanisms and for monitoring requirements. They highlighted financing gaps for investments. Interviewees nonetheless felt that, while the resources spent on improving water management and water quality, building new sewer systems, or reducing flood risks have been expensive, the benefits outweigh the costs even if they have been slow to materialise.

The LRA inputs identified several areas where coherence could be improved. Notably, implementation of the WFD requires action across economic sectors: concerns were raised in particular regarding agriculture. It was suggested that the global Sustainable Development Goals, including SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, provide a valuable perspective to strengthen implementation of the WFD and related legislation, in particular at local level.

The inputs received also highlighted the continued relevance of the Directives and their EU added value.

Looking forward, the European Commission's Green Deal can provide an opportunity for strengthened implementation of the Directives. Further work is needed to strengthen multi-level governance in some Member States. There are opportunities to make greater use of nature-based solutions, and LRAs can play an important role in implementing such measures.

As part of the study, a national sheet was developed for each Member State (plus the United Kingdom), describing water management competencies at local, regional and national level. The national sheets also included an assessment of impacts on LRAs of the recommendations set out in the assessments of the 2nd River Basin Management Plans and the 1st Flood Risk Management Plans. This work shows the large differences in governance and in the roles of LRA approaches across countries. While these differences are somewhat linked to the overall division of powers within countries, this does not preclude water management approaches from being adopted by other Member States: these national sheets could provide a basis for further work to share good practices among LRAs.

Introduction

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) came into force in December 2000, making it the first 'integrated' Directive in the field of water. The WFD sets out steps to be implemented by Member States in order to ensure all Europe's inland and coastal waters reaches "good status" by 2015. One such step requires Member States to develop River Basin Management Plans (RBMPs) for each River Basin District (RBDs), to be revised every six years.

To enable the success of the WFD objectives, several 'Daughter Directives' were established, including the Groundwater Directive and the Environmental Quality Standards Directive. These Directives have the explicit aim to manage groundwater (in the case of the former) and list the levels of pollutants and other substances to be achieved in order to control the risks and achieve good chemical status under the WFD (in the case of the latter Directive). In addition, the Floods Directive was established after significant flooding in central Europe and France in 2002 and 2005 in order to improve the management and planning of floods both within Member States and trans-nationally. Under the Floods Directive, Member States are to produce Flood Risk Management Plans (FRMPs) for each sub-unit (Units of Management, UoMs).

The Fitness Check identified both aspects of the legislation which are working well and areas for improvement, meaning it will form the basis of water management discussions at EU level moving forward. Such discussions will also impact LRAs, many of whom are either directly or indirectly involved in water management. It is therefore important to consider LRA reactions to the recent Fitness Check.

This study uses the publicly available information from the Fitness Check, literature, interviews and stakeholder inputs to identify LRA positions related to the Fitness Check. It follows the evaluation criteria used by the Fitness Check: Effectiveness, Efficiency, Coherence, Relevance, and EU Added Value.

The study also highlights the importance of multi-level governance with regard to water management. As part of the study, a national sheet was developed for each Member State (plus the United Kingdom) describing water management competencies at local, regional and national level. The national sheets also included an assessment of the impacts on LRAs of the recommendations set out in the assessments of the 2nd River Basin Management Plans and the 1st Flood Risk Management Plans. These national sheets are described in Part II of this report, and can be found in Annex 3.

Part II: National sheets

National sheets were developed to describe the division of powers (national, regional, local) of different authorities in the implementation of the WFD and FD, and to assess the impact on LRAs of the recommendations to each Member State on the implementation of both Directives. This work feeds into the information already available on the CoR Division of Powers portal, in particular the Member State pages “Environment & the Fight against Climate Change”¹. The style of the Division of Powers portal for each Member State has been used as a template, noting that the portal pages for some Member States follow a different style than others.

These national sheets were developed using the country-specific assessments for EU Member States' second River Basin Management Plans and the assessments for the first Flood Risk Management Plans². Additional information was gathered through desk research.

The national sheets provide a comprehensive overview of how water management is carried out, especially at local and regional level. One finding shows that many Member States implement the WFD and the Floods Directive at national level, while some Member States have dedicated water authorities at either national or regional level. The table below summarises the findings of the Member States, setting out which level of government has the main responsibility for water management (N = national level, R = regional, L = local, RBD = river basin district), compared against the overall division of powers (sub-national legislative powers) taken from the current portal of the Committee of the Regions³.

Table 1: Summary of responsible authorities

	Legislative powers at sub-national level	Level of authority with strongest water competencies	Dedicated water authority
Austria	✓	N(R)	
Belgium	✓	R	
Bulgaria		N	RBD
Croatia		N	N
Cyprus		N	
Czech Republic		N/R	R
Denmark		N/L	(R)
Estonia		N	
Finland	✓	N	N

¹ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/default.aspx>

² https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/water-framework/impl_reports.htm

³ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/default.aspx>

	Legislative powers at sub-national level	Level of authority with strongest water competencies	Dedicated water authority
France		R	R
Germany	✓	R	
Greece		N/R	N/R
Hungary		N	N/R
Ireland		N	
Italy	✓	R	
Latvia		N	
Lithuania		N	
Luxembourg		N	N
Malta		N	(N)
Netherlands		RBD	RBD
Poland		R(N)	R
Portugal	✓	N(R)	N(R)
Romania		N	N
Slovakia		N	
Slovenia		N	
Spain	✓	R	RBD/R
Sweden		R	N/R(RBD)
UK	✓	R	(R)

N = national level, R = regional level, L = local level, RBD = River Basin District.

In those Member States where water is managed at national level, the recommendations set out in the assessments of the second RBMPs and first FRMPs are expected to have little impact on LRAs, although impacts could potentially be expected when recommendations concern increased consultations with stakeholders (including LRAs), or improved monitoring, where LRAs are responsible for this. On the other hand, where Member States have delegated water management competencies, including drafting and implementing the RBMPs and FRMPs, the recommendations are directly relevant to LRAs, and it will be up to the LRAs to implement them.

Part III: The evaluation of the WFD, FD and daughter Directives according to LRAs

3.1 Introduction

In late 2019 the European Commission adopted the Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive (WFD) together with the Floods Directive (FD), and two relevant daughter Directives of the WFD:

- Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC)
- Floods Directive (2007/60/EC)
- Groundwater Directive (2006/118/EC)
- Environmental Quality Standards (EQS) Directive (2008/105/EC)

The objective of the Fitness Check⁴ was to ensure that these pieces of water legislation are still fit for purpose. The Fitness Check concluded that the Directives ‘are largely fit for purpose’. They have led to a higher level of protection of water bodies and improved flood risk management. It noted that the WFD has been successful in setting up a governance framework for integrated water management, slowing water deterioration, and reducing chemical pollution; however, it was also noted that there have been significant delays in implementation, with fewer than half of EU’s water bodies achieving good status (despite a 2015 deadline). According to the Fitness Check, the WFD’s objectives have not yet been reached due to insufficient funding, slow implementation, and insufficient integration of environmental objectives in sectoral policies – and not to shortcomings in EU water legislation.

This report describes the positions of LRAs with regard to the Fitness Check, following the methodology set out in Section 3.2. The LRA perspective is then presented for each of the five main evaluation criteria used in the Fitness Check:

- effectiveness (the impact of the Directives and changes operated by the Directives),
- efficiency (costs and benefits of the Directives),
- coherence (how well the Directives work internally and with other EU interventions),

⁴ European Commission, (2019). Fitness Check of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive (Brussels, 10-12-2019) https://ec.europa.eu/environment/water/fitness_check_of_the_eu_water_legislation/

- relevance (how well the Directives objectives match the current needs and problems), and
- EU added value⁵.

The limited information gathered on LRA positions means that this study does not provide a full and representative picture of all LRAs within Europe, or even within a single Member State. Moreover, as seen in Part II of this report, the LRA roles in terms of water management vary across Member States and as a result they are likely to have a range of different perspectives. Additionally, this study does not aim to replicate the Fitness Check, thus the scope is limited to issues directly of interest to LRAs.

3.2 Methodology

The conclusions of the Fitness Check constitute a starting point, and the conclusions at national and EU level can trickle down to local and regional level. It is worth noting that a detailed supporting study was published accompanying the Fitness Check⁶, and information from the supporting study has been used in this report as well.

The Fitness Check of the WFD and Floods Directives and the supporting study make little reference to LRAs, so benefits and problems which may be relevant at EU and national levels may not be as important at local and regional levels. To compliment the conclusions of the Fitness Check, the following resources were used:

- Responses submitted under the Roadmap consultation,
- Summaries of position papers submitted under the Fitness Check (as presented in the supporting study),
- Interviews with relevant stakeholders and submissions provided during the CoR's Stakeholder Workshop⁷,
- Literature review.

Responses to the Roadmap consultations – the preliminary phase of the Fitness

⁵ According to the Fitness Check: “The assessment of the Directives’ EU added value considers what changes are due to intervention at EU level and what Member States would have done without EU action.” It also considers whether they are in line with the subsidiarity principle, which requires that EU action only be taken when it is better achieved at EU level and not by Member States individually.

⁶ Vermeulen, J., Whiteoak, K., Nicholls, G., Gerber, et al (2019). Fitness check evaluation of the Water Framework Directive and the Floods Directive: Final evaluation report. European Commission, Directorate-General for Environment.

⁷ Held on 20 February 2020 at the Committee of Regions, Brussels, Belgium.

Check – were open October-November 2017 and set out the Roadmap for the upcoming evaluation. The Roadmap introduced the context, purpose and scope of the evaluation, and the process of the better regulation process. Eighty-two respondents submitted responses during this time period, and four were identified as being submitted by local or regional governments or organisations representing their interests. These responses are available online⁸.

In the main phase of consultation, the Fitness Check collected viewpoints from stakeholders in a number of ways. Public consultations were held from September 2018 to March 2019 and generated 98 responses from public authorities. However, the published results did not differentiate between national, local, or regional responses. The main consultation for the Fitness Check also received 90 position papers, which are presented in summaries at the end of the supporting study. Nine were identified as being submitted by local or regional governments, or organisations representing their interests, and the information in these summaries has been used in this study.

Interviews were undertaken as part of this study to understand the position of various LRAs regarding the Fitness Check. A list of 19 potential interviewees was provided by the Committee of Regions, representing both local and regional governments geographically spread throughout Europe. These potential interviewees were invited to either participate in an interview or submit written comments (in either English or their native languages). A reminder was sent a week later to those who did not reply. Several potential interviewees declined, citing a lack of time or relevant knowledge, and some interviews were not possible to set up within the timeframe of this report. The Table below summarises the responses received by the 28th of February. Note that throughout this report, all responses are referred to as “interviewees” regardless of whether an interview was carried out or a written response received.

Table 2: Summary of responses

Member State	Level of governance	Response type
Belgium	Regional Agency	Interview
Croatia	Region	Written response
Netherlands	Municipality	Interview
Netherlands	Municipality	Interview
Netherlands	Province	Written response
Poland	Region	Written response
Romania	Region	Written response

⁸ https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-5128184_en

The Committee of the Regions provided a list of possible sources which would form the foundation of the literature review. These sources were scanned to determine their relevance for local and regional authorities. While many concerned national or EU-level implementation, or focused on technical aspects, several described the implementation of water policy at local and regional scale, and the relevant information supplements the other sources used in this report.

The following sections set out the evaluation of the WFD, Floods Directive and daughter Directives, following the evaluation criteria used in the Fitness Check: effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance, and EU added value. Each section presents the conclusions of the Fitness Check (drawing mainly on the supporting study), evidence from position papers submitted for the Roadmap and the Fitness Check itself, and opinions gathered through interviews carried out for this study.

3.3 Effectiveness

The Fitness Check concludes that the ‘WFD and the Floods Directive have been successful in setting up a governance framework for integrated water management’, including management by river basins, improved monitoring, better transboundary cooperation and improved public participation⁹. However, establishing this EU-wide governance framework proved more difficult than expected.

Water status has improved in the EU, but progress has been slow. The supporting study notes that key objectives of the WFD have not been reached, in particular the 2015 target for the achievement of good status. Key reasons include an under-estimation of the level of effort needed, a lack of knowledge on aquatic ecosystems, and funding problems. Moreover, good status of water bodies critically depends on the full implementation of other pieces of EU water legislation such as the Nitrates Directive and the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive (UWWTD), as well as better integration of water objectives in other policy areas such as agriculture, energy, or transport (section 3.5 on coherence also notes challenges for this integration)¹⁰.

With regard to the Floods Directive, the Fitness Check considered implementation to be satisfactory, with a shift in policy from flood defence to flood risk assessment and flood risk management that brings together prevention, protection, preparedness and recovery. For both the FD and the WFD, funding

⁹ Fitness Check, section 6.1, p. 115

¹⁰ Summary document: https://ec.europa.eu/info/law/better-regulation/initiatives/ares-2017-5128184/public-consultation_en

problems were noted. The Fitness Check also notes that the Directives encourage nature-based solutions¹¹, but Member State implementation has not fully utilised this approach. The expert presentation at the Stakeholder Workshop also highlighted nature-based solutions as an opportunity to achieve WFD objectives and protect biodiversity.

The following paragraphs are separated into three crucial areas for LRAs: changes in governance, achievements in water quality, and ongoing challenges for the implementation of the Directives.

3.3.1 Improvements in water governance

The Fitness Check highlights that water governance has changed with the introduction of the WFD. The academic literature also discusses the challenges of introducing this river-basin approach and those stemming more generally from the need for multi-level water governance, a key issue for local and regional authorities (see the box below).

Box 1: New approaches for water governance

Rivers, lakes and groundwater bodies frequently cross borders, both those within countries – such as local and regional borders – and those between countries. The WFD and FD call for a river basin approach for stronger management of water systems. However, prior to the WFD, few EU Member States organised their water management according to natural river basins¹².

While one option for river basin management is to expand the geographic scale of institutional arrangements (for example to national level) so that all factors are incorporated into one jurisdiction, this runs the risk of a broad approach that neglects local nuances and is more likely to ignore political, socioeconomic, and cultural factors¹³. The move to a river basin approach may indeed have led to a shift from local or municipal level to regional or supra-regional level governance¹⁴; however, a river basin authority covering a different territory than

¹¹ The European Commission defines nature-based solutions (NBS) ‘as solutions that are inspired and supported by nature, which are cost-effective, simultaneously provide environmental, social and economic benefits and help build resilience. Such solutions bring more, and more diverse, nature and natural features and processes into cities, landscapes and seascapes, through locally adapted, resource-efficient and systemic interventions.’ See: <https://ec.europa.eu/research/environment/index.cfm?pg=nbs>

¹² Andersson, I., Petersson, M., & Jarsjö, J. (2012). Impact of the European water framework directive on local-level water management: case study Oxunda catchment, Sweden. *Land Use Policy*, 29(1), 73-82.

¹³ Moss, T. (2012). Spatial fit, from panacea to practice: implementing the EU Water Framework Directive. *Ecology and Society*, 17(3).

¹⁴ Andersson, I., Petersson, M., & Jarsjö, J. (2012). Impact of the European water framework directive on local-level water management: case study Oxunda catchment, Sweden. *Land Use Policy*, 29(1), 73-82.

political jurisdictions could lack the legitimacy and authority of democratically elected bodies at local, regional, or central levels. One solution to this dilemma is to use a “patchwork of institutions affecting water resources at various levels and with various remits”, which can be more effective than a single authority¹⁵. Such an arrangement, seen in several Member States (see Annex 3), means that good cooperation among actors at different levels of government is vital.

The river basin approach in the WFD also involves a change in thinking from a narrow focus on discharges to a systems approach to water management, and this change has been difficult in many Member States¹⁶.

Position papers submitted as part of the Fitness Check by LRAs also raised issues concerning multi-level governance. Several stressed the need for local governments to be more involved in water management. One, for example, noted that local administrations are closer to and therefore have good knowledge of water bodies.

The interviews highlighted, from the LRA perspective, improvements in governance brought by the WFD. One interviewee said there has been a shift from an exploitation-mechanistic approach to an evolutionary-ecosystemic approach, suggesting that a shift to systems thinking has been at least partially achieved. Several interviewees also noted that the WFD is responsible for increasing visibility and moving water up the political agenda, with one crediting the WFD to improving the environmental and water consciousness of decision makers and specialist sectors.

Interviewees also reported that cooperation between different levels of government and with neighbouring authorities has been strengthened by EU water legislation. One interviewee said that the WFD has increased the speed at which previously existing cooperation mechanisms were implemented. One Dutch interviewee noted that cooperation between the Dutch municipalities and the water authorities (*Waterschappen*, water boards) has improved under the WFD (see box below), and another indicated that cooperation between the Dutch provinces and the water authorities also seems to be improved, especially since the provinces set ecological objectives for regional WFD water bodies.

¹⁵ Huitema, D., Mostert, E., Egas, W., Moellenkamp, S., Pahl-Wostl, C., & Yalcin, R. (2009). Adaptive water governance: assessing the institutional prescriptions of adaptive (co-) management from a governance perspective and defining a research agenda. *Ecology and society*, 14(1).

¹⁶ Voulvoulis N., Arpon K.K., Giakoumis T., The EU Water Framework Directive: From great expectations to problems with implementation, *Science of The Total Environment*, Vol. 575.

Box 2: Increased cooperation prompted by the WFD

One interviewee noted that in the Netherlands, the WFD has fostered a stronger relationship between the municipalities responsible for local sewage and stormwater management and the water authorities responsible for the management of water quantity and quality.

Historically the autonomous, sub-national water authorities were responsible for water quantity in their areas (dating back to the 13th century). With the establishment of the WFD, their competencies grew to include water quality. However, the water authorities are primarily technical bodies, which means municipalities found it difficult to cooperate with them, even if some of the responsibilities overlap. The interviewee explained that as the competencies of the water authorities expanded, the need for cooperation with municipalities has grown, and as a result municipalities and water authorities work more closely together.

While the WFD (and FD) have required new investments, an interviewee noted that this has driven cooperation both across different governance levels and with neighbours. In at least one Member State, however, an interview highlighted problems with multi-level governance, as local governments were called to implement national plans but did not receive adequate financing to do so.

3.3.2 Water management achievements

Position papers submitted as part of the Fitness Check by LRAs noted that the WFD has improved water quality and affirmed that it remains a valuable policy tool.

Interviews for this study also highlighted several ways the Directives have been effective. Several interviewees noted that the WFD provides a legal framework that not only harmonises the playing field across different levels of government and throughout the EU, but also motivates actors to achieve specific goals (also because of the threat of infringement procedures). EU water legislation has led to an improvement in water quality (especially with regard to waste water discharges and agricultural runoff), and led to an increase in water infrastructure, flood protection systems, and other large investments.

3.3.3 Key challenges

Position papers from LRAs also raised several concerns. Some referred to governance issues. An association of local authorities and regions, for example, stated that due to the complexity of the WFD and the lack of data, it is not clear for municipalities what exactly is required from them, nor whether a certain

measure would be considered sufficient. A paper submitted by City of Paris highlighted that there needs to be a good partnership between rural and urban areas.

Several position papers referred to waste water treatment (and urban discharges are a key pressure for many water bodies). Among the points raised was a call for more flexibility in the choice of treatment technology, especially in small towns, and more extensive information on waste water discharges among the countries in the Danube River basin. One position paper mentioned the potential for reuse of treated waste water, though it noted concerns over the management of storm water, especially in cities. Three position papers call for greater consideration of the Right2Water Citizens' Initiative, a petition receiving more than 1.8 million signatures: this initiative emphasises that water and sanitation be considered a human right. These concerns are outside the direct scope of the WFD; however, they highlight key issues faced by municipalities, which are usually responsible for water supply and waste water management.

Several papers referred to the costs of implementing the WFD, stating for example that reporting requirements are too complex. Other position papers from LRAs highlighted problems in the implementation of the Polluter Pays Principle.

Several position papers referred to the WFD's One Out All Out principle (see the box below), saying that it masks both problems and progress. According to one position paper, problems with the OOA principle means securing investment is sometimes difficult.

Box 3: One Out All Out Principle

The One Out All Out principle refers to the assessment of elements used to determine water status. The overall status of a water body is determined by the level of the lowest element, so even if all other elements are assessed positively, one poor element will mean a poor overall status.

The WFD itself does not use the phrase; instead, its Annex V, Section 1.4.2(i) requires that ecological status class for a waterbody "shall be represented by the lower of the values for the biological and physico-chemical monitoring results for the relevant quality elements". The term 'OOAO principle' was introduced under the Common Implementation Strategy for the WFD¹⁷, which highlighted the method as implementing the precautionary principle¹⁸.

¹⁷ EC (European Commission), 2005. Overall approach to the classification of ecological status and ecological potential, Common Implementation Strategy for the Water Framework.

¹⁸ For alternative approaches to OOA, see for example Moe, S. J., Solheim, A. L., Soszka, H., Gołub, M., Hutorowicz, A., Kolada, A., ... & Białokoz, W. (2015). Integrated assessment of ecological status and misclassification of lakes: the role of uncertainty and index combination rules. *Ecological Indicators*, 48, 605-615.

Several interviewees and participants in the Stakeholder Workshop mentioned the One Out All Out mechanism, saying that it can demotivate not only the efforts of those implementing the Directive but also the general public, as improvements in water body status can take a long time to show in reporting conclusions.

The interviews also highlighted the need to strengthen the implementation of the WFD. One interview called for further information gathering, stating that current reporting requirements identify basic characteristics but are not detailed enough to identify the hierarchy of drivers which are specific for every catchment.

One interviewee said that more work needs to be done at EU level to ensure Member States are implementing the Directive in a harmonised way. Another interviewee underlined that an important factor is the will to implement the Directive, especially when it comes to solving problems – if actors want to find a solution, they will succeed in doing so.

3.4 Efficiency

The Fitness Check identified a significant lack of data with regard to the costs and benefits of the WFD. Despite this, it was able to conclude that the Directive has had a number of clear benefits. Its implementation has reduced emissions to the aquatic environment and improved ecological, chemical and quantitative status of water bodies, leading to wider ecosystem service benefits. It was also noted that there has been better knowledge of water environments, improved cooperation and better public information.

The Fitness Check identified costs for Member States¹⁹:

- the costs of WFD-specific measures reported by Member States in the second cycle of RBMPs are €13.8 billion per year in the second cycle;
- for the FRMPs, the costs for flood protection, prevention and preparedness are over €12.5 billion for entire cycle (over €1.7 billion a year).

Most of these costs are for investments to improve water status and reduce flood risk. The Fitness Check noted that the WFD also introduced new monitoring and analysis requirements for Member States, as well as new governance and planning approaches; the FD has also involved new requirements. Overall, the Fitness Check finds that ‘the costs involved in implementing the WFD, GWD, EQSD and FD to be justified given the benefits that will be achieved in the long term’²⁰.

¹⁹ Fitness Check, section 6.1, pp. 116-7.

²⁰ Fitness Check, section 5.2.1, p. 55.

As already noted, Part II of this report shows that the roles of LRAs vary greatly across Member States: consequently, the costs they bear related to these Directives will also vary significantly.

Position papers submitted by LRAs referred in particular to costs related to urban water services. One position paper suggested that in order to maximise efficiency and minimise costs of service provision, waste water infrastructure would be best planned and potentially implemented and managed at regional level rather than at either local or national level. Another position paper noted that there are financing gaps between waste water tariff revenues and total costs of waste water services in several new Member States, and there is therefore a need to strengthen the financial viability of utilities for financial stability and access to financial markets.

Several interviewees for this study noted that benefits stemming from the WFD and other water legislation are difficult to quantify, so it is difficult to assess whether the costs are justified. As an example, improved water management contributes to climate change adaptation, but such benefits are difficult to measure. Another interviewee also noted that it is not clear which investments will contribute to the WFD objective of good water status, nor is there insight into how investments and policy decisions made at different governmental levels together contribute to the objectives.

Several interviewees referred to the administrative costs of the legislation. One said that although the WFD sets up a planning method, the amount of information which must also be reported to the Commission is large. Another interviewee noted that the implementation of the WFD is complex, requiring a lot of administrative costs. A third comment is that a lack of expertise has hindered the efficiency of implementation in their Member State. Other interviewees were less concerned by the additional administrative burden or commented that these costs were more due to national implementation approaches rather than the EU Directives themselves.

At the same time, interviewees felt that, while the resources spent on improving water management and water quality, building new sewer systems, or reducing flood risks have been expensive, the benefits outweigh the costs even if they are slow to materialise, as these investments have led to better quality of living and an improved environment. For example, one interviewee noted that the WFD's monitoring requirements have increased administrative costs significantly, however, this has resulted in the precise assessment of water body ecological status, which provides a background for designing cost-efficient actions.

Several interviewees noted that the costs associated with water management vary both between governance levels and also among authorities at the same level. One interviewee said that an urban municipality must spend much more money treating waste water compared to a more rural municipality with ample surface water available for the discharge of treated water.

3.5 Coherence

The Fitness Check concluded that the Directives ‘form for the most part an internally coherent package’²¹. The background study noted that the interactions of the four Directives considered are positive and lead to synergies, although better coordination in the implementation of the WFD and the Floods Directive was encouraged to avoid counter-productive actions. The Fitness Check also found that the Directives are ‘largely coherent with and complementary to the EU’s wider climate and environmental policy’, though issues were noted vis-à-vis chemicals legislation²².

While ‘progress has been made’ on integration with EU sectoral policies, the Fitness Check found that ‘there are still issues of incoherence’ with policies on ‘agriculture, energy and transport’ that in particular can hinder achievement of the WFD’s objectives²³. Coherence with the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is described in the box below.

Box 4: Coherence between the WFD and the CAP

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) ‘aims to: support farmers and improve agricultural productivity... help tackle climate change and the sustainable management of natural resources... maintain rural areas and landscapes... [and] keep the rural economy alive’²⁴.

Agriculture is a major pressure on water bodies, both for water use in irrigation and in terms of runoff of agricultural chemicals²⁵. In the current CAP, greening and cross-compliance measures address climate change and promote the sustainable management of natural resources, including water. According to the

²¹ Fitness Check, section 6.1, p. 117.

²² Fitness Check, section 6.1, p. 117.

²³ Fitness Check, section 6.1, p. 117.

²⁴ European Commission (DG Agriculture and Rural Development), The common agricultural policy at a glance, web page:

https://ec.europa.eu/info/food-farming-fisheries/key-policies/common-agricultural-policy/cap-glance_en

²⁵ European Environment Agency, European waters: Assessment of status and pressures 2018, EEA Report No. 7/2018.

background study for the Fitness Check, however, in practice the environmental impacts of the greening and cross-compliance measures have not met expectations, and challenges remain for integration²⁶.

The support study does not delve into the LRA dimension of WFD/CAP interactions nonetheless, in some Member States, regional authorities are responsible for implementing the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), which among others supports actions for environmental protection going beyond regulatory compliance

The Fitness Check moreover finds that the WFD is coherent with the 17 global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and in particular with SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation. The WFD notably provides a mechanism for integrated water resources management, including via transboundary cooperation, one of the SDG 6 targets. The protection and restoration of water-related ecosystems is a goal of the WFD: as noted above under effectiveness, the Fitness Check and the stakeholder workshop highlighted the need for further action to achieve this, including via nature-based solutions. Neither the Fitness Check nor its supporting study, however, address LRA roles in SDG 6 (the Table below provides a brief overview of the potential roles).

Table 3: Overview of LRA roles in SDG 6

Selected SDG 6 Targets	Target date	Relation to EU water legislation	LRA role
achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed via the Drinking Water Directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often an LRA responsibility
improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials...	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed by WFD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An LRA responsibility in some Member States
halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed under Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Often an LRA responsibility
substantially increase water-use efficiency across all sectors	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not directly addressed by EU water legislation A requirement for irrigation under EAFRD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> EAFRD managed at regional level in some Member States

²⁶ Supporting study, p. 191-2

implement integrated water resources management at all levels, including through transboundary cooperation	2030	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed by WFD's approach for river basin management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specifically an LRA responsibility
protect and restore water-related ecosystems, including rivers, aquifers and lakes	2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressed by WFD objective of good ecological status 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not specifically an LRA responsibility
Support and strengthen the participation of local communities in improving water and sanitation management	No specific date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local role in water management not directly addressed by WFD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sanitation often an LRA responsibility

Sources: United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Knowledge Platform (<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg6>); own analysis

Position papers submitted under the Fitness Check by LRAs mentioned several instances of incoherence with EU water and other environmental legislation. For example, one position paper stated that some Natura 2000 areas are linked to water bodies that have less than optimal water quality. Others stated that the Polluter Pays Principle could be reinforced: related to this, one position paper commented that the success of the WFD will depend on how well it is integrated with policy areas such as agriculture, industry and transport, which are key sources of water pollution.

One interviewee for this study noted that there is good coherence with Natura 2000 and the Nature Directives. This interviewee felt, however, there could be benefits from a stronger link between water policy and the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), as well as with EU legislation on plant protection products and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Interviewees also noted that the goal of sustainable agriculture has not yet been attained, especially since the historical legacy of the sector hinders the achievement of the WFD's objectives.

At the stakeholder workshop, speakers highlighted the inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral nature of the WFD. The impacts of agricultural practices and the CAP on rural landscapes and water resources were highlighted in the introductory presentations, including the runoff of agricultural chemicals and landscape changes that have, for example, led to a loss of wetlands. Stakeholders participating in the meeting called for greater efforts to mainstream the WFD's objectives into the CAP.

As noted above, speakers and participants at the workshop highlighted nature-based solutions as a mechanism that can achieve WFD objectives together with nature and biodiversity goals. It was also noted that the Green Deal, with its call

for a zero-pollution action plan for air, water and soil, raises expectations for the implementation of the WFD. The Green Deal also refers to a new EU strategy on adaptation to climate change, and several stakeholders said that climate impacts bring challenges for future implementation of the WFD.

The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with their inclusion of human rights, were also mentioned at the stakeholder workshop as an important perspective that needs to be addressed in water management. Speakers at the stakeholder workshop highlighted examples of good practice at local level and indicated that more could be done to increase the role of LRAs and thus better implement the SDG 6 target for a strengthened role of local communities in water management.

3.6 Relevance

The Fitness Check concluded that ‘(t)he objectives of the Directives...are as relevant now as they were when the Directives were adopted, if not more so’ and highlighted that the Directives address key planetary boundaries including freshwater use, biodiversity and the nitrogen and phosphorus cycles²⁷.

The supporting study for the Fitness Check noted that not all waters in the EU are in good condition yet, while pressures from various sources remain and are expected to remain in the near future. At the same time, consultation results suggested that there are gaps in the Directives, especially with regard to emerging substances, climate change, and water quantity.

Interviewees for this study generally agreed with the findings of the background study. One interviewee noted that the WFD has the opportunity to promote new solutions to current problems, while another pointed out that the world is not static and there needs to be a periodic review to see whether rules can be simplified or deleted. One interviewee in particular noted that in general, the legislation focuses on preventing and reducing contaminants, but there is not enough to encourage restoration and the enhancement of sustainability potential in catchments.

Several participants at the workshop emphasised that the WFD remains an important part of EU environmental legislation. For example, one said that ECJ rulings have strengthened the WFD’s legal certainty, and the priority should be on better implementation rather than changes to the legislation.

²⁷ Fitness Check, section 6.1, p. 118

3.7 EU added value

The Fitness Check found great potential for EU value added from the Directives, especially through the facilitation of transboundary cooperation in international waters, setting a common best practice framework across the EU, and introducing a number of other innovative policy instruments. Nonetheless, the Fitness Check found that the full potential of these innovations has not been achieved in practice, and further progress is needed on transboundary cooperation.

Few position papers submitted under the Fitness Check specifically covered EU added value; however, one did note that even if its targets will probably not be met by 2027, the WFD has created a valid, cross-country framework for water management. Similarly, another position paper said that cross-border measures in the Floods Directive ensure that actions to reduce flood risks in one country contribute to reduced flood risk in others.

A respondent interviewed for this project stressed the importance of the transboundary aspects of the WFD, especially for downstream Member States. Furthermore, the WFD promotes cooperation between different levels of government. Another interviewee, however, felt that most of the results of the WFD such as improved and integrated water management and improved water quality would likely to have materialised in their country without the WFD, but at a much slower rate.

At the stakeholder workshop, participants praised the innovative nature of the WFD. One, for example, said that it is at the forefront of environmental protection and is an example for other parts of the world.

Part IV: Conclusions and policy recommendations

The Fitness Check as well as the interviewees consulted for this report identified challenges and opportunities for the implementation of the Directives. This section sets out how these problems can be addressed, moving forward.

4.1 Legal implications

Several interviewees and stakeholders at the workshop mentioned potential amendments to the Directives. One opportunity would be addressing emerging contaminants such as microplastics and pharmaceuticals under the EQS Directive. Several issues were raised concerning the WFD, notably the OOA principle. Nonetheless, as NGOs underlined at the Stakeholder Workshop, reopening the Directive creates a risk that its level of ambition would be lowered.

It is recommended that the CoR propose the inclusion of emerging pollutants under the EQS Directive but not call for amendments to the WFD or the FD.

LRAs highlighted the fact that it is unlikely that Member States will achieve the WFD's objectives by 2027, after which further extensions to achieve good status can no longer be applied. It is possible that the European Commission could at this point launch infringement procedures against Member States. It is unclear what impact this would have on the LRAs: as noted in Part II, their responsibilities for implementation vary greatly across Member States. In Member States where regions have a leading role in water management, they could be liable for fines issued by the ECJ²⁸.

The CoR could call on the European Commission to focus on promoting better implementation of the WFD, including at local and regional levels, rather than taking legal approaches where good status is not met.

²⁸ In Germany, for example, Länder may be potentially responsible for fines issued by the ECJ. See: Wiering, M. A., Liefferink, D., Kaufmann, M., & Kurstjens, N. (2018). The implementation of the Water Framework Directive: a focused comparison of governance arrangements to improve water quality.

4.2 Synergies with the Green Deal and other policy initiatives

Efforts to improve implementation of the Directives should be considered in light of the European Commission's recent Green Deal²⁹, which sets out an ambitious package of measures to protect and improve Europe's environment. One element of the Green Deal is a proposed zero pollution action plan for air, water, and soil, foreseen for 2021: such an action plan could include measures that complement the WFD, and potentially address some of the shortcomings identified in the Fitness Check.

The Green Deal also sets out sectoral initiatives that could support the achievement of the WFD's goals. The 'Farm to Fork' strategy laid out in the Green Deal to promote sustainable agriculture will include measures which will directly improve water quality, and according to the Green Deal, the Commission will follow up on the 2018 plastics strategy³⁰ with a particular focus on microplastics. The Green Deal's reference to agriculture is important, as both the Fitness Check and the CoR workshop highlighted the need for stronger integration between the WFD and this sector.

The Green Deal also states that the European Commission will adopt a new, more ambitious EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change: this strategy will be relevant for implementation of the Floods Directive, as climate change is exacerbating that flood risks. Stakeholders at the workshop raised concerns about the increasing risks of water scarcity and drought: the new EU Strategy on adaptation should also address this aspect of water management.

The CoR could call on the European Commission, Parliament and Council to ensure that implementation of the Green Deal supports the achievement of the WFD's objectives and those of the Floods Directive.

The CoR could in addition call on the European Commission, Parliament and Council to ensure that WFD objectives are more strongly integrated into the new CAP proposal, as well as into EU energy and transport policies. Moreover, the CoR could call on its members to support greater integration of the WFD and FD with the CAP and other sectoral policies through further actions that protect rural landscapes and biodiversity, including nature-based solutions.

²⁹ European Commission, 2019, The European Green Deal, COM(2019) 640 final.

³⁰ European Commission, 2018, A European Strategy for Plastics in a Circular Economy, COM(2018) 28 final.

The Green Deal highlights the role of research to achieve environmental goals. The new Horizon Europe Programme includes “Healthy oceans, seas, coastal and inland waters” as one of its five mission areas³¹: this mission can support the uptake of new methods for water management. Further research can improve monitoring, help to understand better emerging threats such as climate change and support the implementation of nature-based solutions.

The CoR could call on Horizon Europe to support innovative approaches to implement the Directives.

The Green Deal states that it is part of the Commission’s strategy to implement the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Stakeholders at the CoR workshop highlighted the importance of the SDGs and their indicators, which provide a tool to raise awareness. According to a 2020 OECD report³², the role of municipalities and territories in implementing the SDGs is growing, including in terms of policy coordination across sectors and in multi-level governance; a number of LRAs have identified SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) as a priority. Following this logic, linking EU water management concretely to the SDGs would not only encourage a more holistic and integrated approach to environmental and sustainable management, but also support work already done by municipalities and regions.

The CoR could call for further integrating the implementation of the Directives with the EU efforts to achieve the SDGs.

4.3 Strengthening multi-level governance

The Fitness Check, the background literature and the inputs from LRAs all emphasise that the WFD has established a new, common approach for water governance across the EU. Its focus on management at river basin level requires stronger multi-level governance, and new methods have been slow to take root in many Member States.

The national fact sheets developed for this study show that Member States have very different approaches to water management, from long-established decentralised systems to very centralised, top-down approaches. Consequently, each Member State has taken its own approach to implementing the WFD. Nonetheless, cooperation and coordination among levels of governance are

³¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/horizon-europe-next-research-and-innovation-framework-programme_en

³² OECD (2020), A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report, OECD Urban Policy Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e86fa715-en>

needed. One research study noted cases where RBMPs needed to be better integrated with local and regional decision-making procedures³³. The interviewees for this report have highlighted examples where the WFD has strengthened cooperation across levels of government and also among LRAs; in other cases, gaps in cooperation remain.

LRAs have a strong role to play in water management. SDG 6 calls for a stronger role for local communities in water governance. LRAs can provide area-specific management that considers local physical characteristics as well as societal interests and problems³⁴.

The CoR could call on the European Commission and Member States to support a stronger role for LRAs in the implementation of the Directives. These could involve, among other actions, the sharing of good practices among LRAs, for example through the Common Implementation Strategy and peer-to-peer exchanges.

4.4 A greater role for nature-based solutions

The Fitness Check notes that nature-based solutions can support the implementation of the WFD and especially the Floods Directive³⁵. The expert presentation at the CoR stakeholder workshop showed that nature-based solutions provide a new paradigm for water management that can restore landscapes and help to achieve biodiversity goals.

Nature-based solutions need to be tailored to the water bodies and ecosystems that exist (or once existed) in specific locations. LRAs can play an important role in putting in place these place-based measures. These actions are often local: planting trees or reducing soil sealing in urban areas can reduce flood risks³⁶, and can be implemented at a relatively low cost. At the stakeholder workshop it was mentioned that LRAs often have the competence and tools to undertake such measures. One interviewee gave an example of a nature reserve and recreation area created by a municipality; this doubled as an overflow reservoir during flooding events (and also held common reeds and other vegetation to help filter

³³ Zandstra, T. (2015). Water Legislation. Cost of Non-Europe Report. European Added Value Unit.

³⁴ Wiering, M. A., Liefverink, D., Kaufmann, M., & Kurstjens, N. (2018). The implementation of the Water Framework Directive: a focused comparison of governance arrangements to improve water quality.

³⁵ Art. 7(3) of the Directive in fact calls for 'the promotion of sustainable land use practices' and the 'improvement of water retention'.

³⁶ For more examples and a further analysis, see for example Oral, H. V., Carvalho, P., Gajewska, M., Ursino, N., Masi, F., Hullebusch, E. D. V., ... & Finger, D. C. (2020). A review of nature-based solutions for urban water management in European circular cities: a critical assessment based on case studies and literature. *Blue-Green Systems*, 2(1), 112-136.

and purify that water). This example shows that nature-based solutions can have multiple benefits both for the environment and for local inhabitants.

The CoR could encourage the great use of nature-based solutions to achieve the goals of the WFD and the Floods Directive. Moreover, it could encourage its members to go further in undertaking these measures, drawing also on ongoing research into nature-based solutions.

4.5 Conclusions

The Fitness Check concluded that the WFD, Floods Directive and related EU water legislation are ‘largely fit for purpose’, and interviewees for this study tended to agree with this judgement. Water quality has improved as a result of the implementation of these Directives, though the WFD’s objective of good status for all water bodies remains distant. Flood risk planning has been strengthened.

It is clear that the WFD and other EU water legislation have changed water management and improved water quality, and the costs, while not readily quantifiable, appear to be outweighed by the benefits. LRAs were mentioned concerns over coherence sectoral policies, in particular the CAP, and also called for greater integration between the WFD and the global SDGs. LRA inputs affirmed the EU-added value of the Directives, and the evidence suggests that LRAs think the WFD and the daughter Directives are still relevant, especially as the objectives are not achieved and additional concerns are emerging, for example micro plastics and climate change.

Interviews with LRAs also suggest that the role of multi-level governance is critically important to the implementation of the WFD and water management in general. The WFD has prompted better coordination among levels of government in at least some Member States. The differences in the roles of LRAs across Member States – as highlighted in the national sheets developed for this report – suggest that there will be different paths to further improvements in governance.

This report drew on LRA inputs to identify opportunities for stronger water management, from new EU policy initiatives to improvements that can be made directly by LRAs. It shows that even if the WFD is deemed fit for purpose, there is a lot to be done, and a lot that can be done, at local, regional, national, and EU level.

Annex 1: List of references

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Annex 2: Interview questions

Potential interview questions were developed based on the research questions set out in the Fitness Check. The research questions were tailored to better capture local and regional viewpoints. These questions were sent to all potential interviewees, who were also invited to provide written answer should they wish.

Effectiveness

What improvements in water management has the implementation of the Directives brought?

- Have any of these changes been unexpected?

How have the Directives improved cooperation between different levels of governance (local/regional/river basins/national)?

- have the Directives led to any changes in the administrative setup for water management (local/regional/national level)?

How have the Directives facilitated transboundary cooperation?

Which main factors have contributed to or stood in the way of achieving the Directives' objectives?

Efficiency

What are the costs and benefits of the legislation and to what extent are the costs of the legislation justified, given the benefits achieved?

- Have the Directives led to new costs for local and/or regional governments? If so, in what areas?
- What types of benefits do you see from the implementation of the Directives?
- Taking account of the objectives and costs/benefits of the Directives is there evidence that they have caused unnecessary administrative burden to authorities or operation?

To what extent do the costs and benefits vary between regional and local government – if so, what is causing this?

What factors have influenced the efficiency, and can good practices be identified?

To what extent are there opportunities to simplify the legislation, create synergies or reduce unnecessary regulatory cost without undermining the objectives of the Directives?

To what extent are monitoring and reporting requirements fit for purpose? How timely and efficient is the Directives' process for reporting and monitoring clear, flexible and simple enough to support timely decision making?

Relevance

To what extent are the objectives still relevant and properly addressing the key problem that ecosystems and society presently face (the adverse consequences of floods and insufficient water status of (selected) water bodies in the EU as needed for sustainable, balanced and equitable water use?

Coherence

To what extent are the Directives satisfactorily integrated and coherent with other parts of EU environmental law/policy?

Annex 3: National sheets

Austria

Central

Art. 10(10) of the Austrian [Constitution](#) gives the Federal level competence to govern water rights and control waters for floods and navigation; Art. 10(12) gives the Federal level competence for pollution emissions to the environment (water bodies).

The Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism is responsible for:

- implementation of water policy,
- monitoring and assessment of groundwater and surface water,
- enforcement of regulations, economic analysis,
- preparation of the RBMPs, PoM, and the FRMPs (especially regarding water legislation, navigation and torrent control)
- coordination of public participation
- implementation of measures and the coordination of implementation
- international cooperation via the international commissions for the Danube, Elbe and Rhine, and via bilateral agreements

Regional

Provinces/federal states are responsible for:

- implementation and enforcement of national laws (including some concerning water)
- emergency flood management and legislation,
- flood warning and defence
- contributing to the preparation of the FRMP and RBMP
- setting standards and rules for waste water treatment
- implementation of measures and the coordination of implementation
- management of water supply and wastewater treatment, in coordination with the federal level

Local

Municipalities are responsible for:

- local compliance with regional and federal laws (regarding drinking water and wastewater)
- regular monitoring of drinking water
- water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment (either directly or via municipally owned companies)
- implementation of measures and the coordination of implementation

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism \(BLRT\)](#)
- [WISA \(water information system in Austria\)](#)

Regional

- Provinces (*Länder*)
- Provincial governors (*Landeshauptfrau/Landeshauptmann*)

Local

- District administrative authorities (*Bezirksverwaltungsbehörde*)
- Local authorities – municipalities (*Gemeinde*)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Austria](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Austria](#)
- [RMP 2015 National Flood Risk Management Plan](#)
- [OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Austria \(2013\) \(OECD\)](#)
- [Water and Wastewater Services in the Danube Region: A state of the sector - Austria \(Danube Water Program\)](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD and Floods Directive implementation report

The national authorities take the lead when preparing the RBMP, so the recommendations will impact this level of governance. The recommendations are mostly procedural (more information to be provided, especially with regard to methodologies), however, recommendations also concern monitoring. Länder may be required to invest more in monitoring; however, better monitoring could improve decision-making at both national and Länder level.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The national authorities take the lead when preparing the FRMP, so the recommendations will impact this level of governance. The recommendations are mostly procedural (more information to be provided, greater coherence between the different steps in the Floods Directive cycle), and are therefore unlikely to impact the Länder directly, despite their competencies concerning floods. However, it is possible that a more robust FRMP at national level will ensure greater coherence and robustness at Länder level as well.

Belgium

Central

National level authorities are responsible for:

- coordination of federal and regional authorities,
- management of coastal waters under the WFD.

Regional

Regional authorities are responsible for:

- legislation and implementation of the policies and legislation regarding water management, including the Water Framework Directive and Floods Directive,
- management of River Basin Districts within their borders,
- coordination with neighbouring countries in shared river basins,
- preparation of FRMPs and RBMPs,
- regulation of polluting industries and production and supply of water,

- oversight of water quality, treatment of wastewater and other environmental plans which might impact water policy,
- setting of standards for water quality and regulating catchment areas and volumes,
- monitoring of drinking water quality,
- water services including drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment via regionally owned companies (in cases also working with local, private and mixed companies).

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- implementing legislation at local level,
- management of small and non-navigable water bodies,
- management of drinking water and waste water services (often delegated to regional or intermunicipal water companies).

In Wallonia, local authorities work together and with stakeholders in participatory river contracts to address common issues in river sub-basins.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment](#)

Regional

- [Brussels Environment](#) (Bruxelles Environnement)
- [Environnement Wallonie](#)
- [Flanders Environment Agency](#)

Local

- Local authorities (municipalite-gemeente-gemeinde)
- [Wallonia River Contracts](#)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Belgium](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Belgium](#)
- Website of [Federal Public Service for Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment](#)
- [First Belgian National Voluntary Review on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The regions are the competent authorities for most RBMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, would impact the regions. The recommendations include improving monitoring and water assessment methodologies, undertaking cost-effective analyses, reporting to the European Commission in a timely manner, promoting the use of green infrastructure. Some of these recommendations, such as promoting green infrastructure, could require investments, while others could require more resources or staff with specialized knowledge. Other recommendations could be fulfilled more easily. Implementing these recommendations will likely improve water management in the regions, especially with regard to effectiveness and efficiency. Some recommendations will affect the local level, including the following on public participation.

Recommendation: Belgium should further ensure that consultation processes at various levels (regional, national, international) are coordinated.

Assessment: The regions are responsible for the RBMPs, including the consultation processes, and thus improving coordination will require effort and likely resources from the regions. In addition, municipalities will likely be impacted as they can contribute to and help coordinate consultations.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The regions are the competent authorities for most FRMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, would impact the regions. Recommendations include providing details on the cost and prioritisation of measures, impacts on climate change, and international and national coordination. Many recommendations could potentially have only a small impact on the regions: providing more information. However, if a lack of information is indicative of an implementation problem, the regions may need to invest in

improving the prioritisation and funding of measures, climate change knowledge, or coordination.

Recommendation: Belgium has organised RBD management along regional lines based on the regional competences in Belgium, thus splitting river basins into separate RBDs for each region. While coordination occurs at several levels – including bilateral cooperation among regions, national coordination and coordination within international RBDs – it is not clear if this is sufficient to ensure that the environmental objectives established by the Directive are achieved efficiently.

Assessment: Regional authorities will need to evaluate whether coordination is sufficient to ensure the objectives of the Directive are achieved. In case it is insufficient, the regions will need to improve coordination, perhaps by dedicating additional resources.

Bulgaria

Central

According to the Water Act, the management of waters is performed at the national and the basin levels. The Ministry of Environment and Water (MoEW):

- proposes legislation and carries out the national policy for water management,
- develops and proposes national strategies, plans and programmes for water management, protection and sustainable use of waters,
- issues permits and plans for water abstraction and/or water use,
- determines the basin districts and protected areas under EU legislation,
- directs the Environment Agency (responsible for data collection and water monitoring) and Regional Inspectorates for Environment and Water (responsible for environmental protection of waters).

Other relevant ministries include the Ministry of Regional Development (for water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment systems and protection from the harmful impacts of waters (including floods) in urban areas); Ministry of Agriculture (irrigation systems and protection from the harmful impacts of water outside urban areas); Ministry of Health (quality control of drinking water, mineral water for health use and bathing waters).

River Basin Directorates (representatives of the Ministry of Environment and Water):

- carry out national water management policy at the basin level,
- prepare and implement the RBMPs and FRMPs,
- issue permits for water use and wastewater discharge.

The Association of water supply and canalisation systems (WSCS): manages water supply and sewerage, where owned by the state and multiple municipalities.

Regional

No competencies identified at the regional level for water management.

Local

Municipal Councils and Mayors:

- develop and implement local policies and strategies on water supply and sewage in accordance with national strategies and plans (e.g. RBMPs)
- oversee the management of drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment services that are municipal property.

Responsible ministries/bodies

- [Ministry of Environment and Water](#); [Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works](#); [Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Forestry](#); [Ministry of Energy](#); [Ministry of Health](#)
- [Executive Environment Agency](#); Regional Inspectorates for Environment and Water; national parks
- River Basin Directorates and Basin Councils
- District Councils and District Governors
- Municipal Councils and Mayors

Sources

- [Water Act \(last amended 13 December 2018\)](#)
- [European Commission - Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan of Bulgaria](#)
- [UN SDGs - Freshwater Country Profile Bulgaria](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “Bulgaria should make sure that the planned measures will ensure compliance with Article 5 of the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive as regards more stringent treatment, especially in big cities. Bulgaria should make sure funding is secured for the planned actions, and make sure measures are sufficient to tackle the significant pressures from UWWTP, by performing a gap analysis, prioritising where necessary agglomerations above 2000 *population equivalent*.”

Assessment: This could require municipalities to plan and implement specific measures for the development or renovation of sewerage and waste water treatment infrastructure on their territory and earmark municipal funds for financing these measures.

Recommendations in the FD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified.

Croatia

Central

State authorities:

- approve the national River Basin Management Plan and the Flood Risk Management Plan and propose relevant legislation and strategies to Parliament,
- adopt the relevant legislation and national strategies, such as the Water Management Strategy,
- facilitate international cooperation, including bilateral cooperation with neighbouring countries and cooperation via international river basin commissions for the Danube and Sava basins,
- exercise overall responsibility for water management, including supervision of Hrvatske vode.

Hrvatske vode (Croatian Waters, a national body under the Ministry of Environment and Energy) is the national authority responsible for water management. Its responsibilities include the following:

- prepare and implement the national River Basin Management Plan, Programme of Measures, Flood Risk Management Plan, water supply plans,
- participate in the drafting of legal and sub-legal acts for water use,
- monitor and assess of groundwater and surface water,
- co-ordinate public participation,
- compile statistical data related to water management,
- provide expert, technical, economic, and legal assistance to municipalities in defining, preparing, and implementing projects.

Regional

- Protect drinking water sources, with local authorities and with prior consent of Hrvatske vode

Local

- Protect drinking water sources, with regional authorities and with prior consent issued by Hrvatske vode,
- Support public consultations for the FRMP and RBMP,
- Implement specific measures set out in the RBMP and FRMP (together with Hrvatske vode),
- Own companies responsible for water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy](#)
- [Hrvatske vode](#)

Regional

- Regional authorities – counties (županije)

Local

- Local authorities (općine i gradovi)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Croatia](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Croatia](#)
- [Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy \(Water and Sea\)](#)
- [Croatia: Voluntary National Review of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Implementation](#)
- [Waste and Water Management in Croatia \(Flanders Investment & Trade Market Survey\)](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “The mechanisms for active involvement of stakeholders should be further developed, for example establishing advisory groups that bring together stakeholders.”

Assessment: this could require a greater role for the promotion and coordination of stakeholder involvement on the part of the local authorities (although the primary actor remains Hrvatske vode)

Recommendation: “Croatia should provide in the next cycle all relevant information on the level of compliance and the timing to reach compliance of agglomerations, including information on funding, in accordance with Directive 91/271/EEC [UWWTD]... It should ensure compliance with Article 5 UWWTD for more stringent treatment, especially in big cities. It should also assess the need to take additional measures on point source pollution beyond the requirements of the UWWTD and IED to fulfil the WFD objectives...”

Assessment: Local authorities own water service companies, and in non-compliant agglomerations, potentially significant resources will be needed. Local authorities may also be required to implement additional measures on point source pollution, if the sources are considered within local competencies.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Recommendation: “The FRMP should provide further details on the approach to public consultation and the active involvement of stakeholders.”

Assessment: this could potentially require further activities and reporting by local authorities, although the impact would be primarily carried by Hrvatske vode.

Cyprus

Central

The central government is responsible for:

- implementing the WFD and Floods Directive, preparing and approving the FRMPs and RBMPs,
- monitoring and evaluating the qualitative and quantitative status of groundwater and surface water,
- carrying out public consultations and coordinating with other Member States,
- issuing regulations concerning the implementation of the WFD and Floods Directives,
- plan, designing, implementing and operating water projects such as dams, reservoirs, water transport projects, irrigation and water supply networks and water refineries,
- coordinating the necessary quantities of desalinated water,
- managing, monitoring, and supplying water for drinking water and irrigation (with the help of local Water Supply Authorities),
- preparing and implementing plans to address the effects of drought,
- implementing the national program of the European Urban Wastewater Treatment Directive,
- promoting sustainable water use.

Regional

Districts are responsible for:

- planning and executing the necessary works and maintenance on stormwater systems,
- executing flood protection projects,
- issuing building permits.

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- managing surface water drainage,
- designing, constructing and maintaining rainwater drainage systems,
- cleaning wells and waterways,
- licensing sewers,

- providing building permits,
- distributing water for drinking and irrigation.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Water Development Department \(WDD\) of the Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment](#)

Regional

- Districts (Eparhia)

Local

- Municipalities (Dimos)
- Communities (Koinotita)
- Local Water supply authorities

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Cyprus](#)
- [Assessment of the First Flood Risk Management Plan of Cyprus](#)
- [Water Development Department](#)
- [Charalambous K et al Improving Public Participation Processes for the Floods Directive and Flood Awareness: Evidence from Cyprus](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “Cyprus is encouraged to step up its use of metering (especially for agriculture) to better determine the quantitative status of water bodies and reduce the over-abstraction of groundwater, mainly due to unregulated self-abstractions and permits insufficiently aligned with environmental requirements.”

Assessment: Local authorities are mainly in charge of permitting and could consider the introduction of a metering requirements especially in fields that are used for agriculture.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Recommendation: “Cyprus is encouraged to systematically consider opportunities to implement nature-based solutions (incl. NWRM), as alternatives, wherever possible, to dredging and ‘grey infrastructure’ modifications of riverbanks and riverbeds.”

Assessment: This could be a competence to be attributed to regional and local authorities, since, apart from a significant overview of all relevant infrastructure work in the area, they also have a stronger grasp on the morphology of the local riverbanks and riverbeds. This recommendation could be an opportunity for LRAs to promote local issues.

Czechia

Central

Central authorities are responsible for:

- preparation and approval of legislation and standards in the field of water protection,
- protection of the quantity and quality of surface and groundwater,
- flood protection,
- national and international water planning, including programs of measures,
- international cooperation in the field of water management,
- economic, financial and administrative instruments in water protection,
- monitoring of qualitative and quantitative values of waste water discharge,
- construction of hydropower facilities,
- quality control of drinking and bathing waters.

Regional

Regional authorities are responsible for:

- implementation of selected measures, preparation of Programme of Measures and preparation of the RBMPs and FRMPs for sub-basins (together with other relevant authorities),
- actions concerning transboundary waters, after consultation with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of the Environment,

- taking measures in emergency situations (drought, accidents etc.) if not taken at municipal level.

Local

Municipal and district authorities:

- issue regulations for the management of surface waters within their competence,
- oversee water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment (managed by private and public water companies).

Responsible ministries/bodies

- Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture
- Water authorities
- Regional authorities
- Municipal authorities and district offices
- Municipal authorities with extended competencies

Sources

- [Reports on the implementation of the end RBMP and first Flood management Plan in CZ](#)
- [Water Act](#)
- [Ministry of Environment website](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The recommendations concern national RBMPs, which would have little direct impact on regional and local authorities (although regional authorities may be required to undertake additional monitoring). However, the recommendations could potentially affect and improve the next cycle of sub-basin RBMPs, and these are prepared by regional authorities. Implementing these recommendations may require more resources from the regional authorities, especially with regard to monitoring and developing the methodology, however, it will result in more robust RBMPs.

Recommendation: “The Czech Republic should further ensure good coordination between the public administration and other stakeholders to improve the planning

and implementation of Programmes of Measures and to monitor their effectiveness.”

Assessment: this recommendation may require regional or local authorities to contribute to, or coordinate consultations, during the planning and implementation of the PoMs. In both cases LRA may be required to contribute more resources (especially time), however, greater coordination with other stakeholders provides an opportunity to remove inefficiencies while enhancing the quality of the planning/implementation process.

Recommendations in the FD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified. The recommendations could potentially affect and improve the next cycle of sub-basin FRMPs, which are prepared by regional authorities. A greater emphasis on measurable objectives and measures, as well as nature-based solutions, may require more resources from the authorities, however, it will result in more robust FRMPs.

Denmark

Central

Central authorities:

- formulate policy,
- monitor and assess the status of groundwater and surface water,
- enforce regulations,
- carry out pressure and impact analysis, economic analysis,
- prepare and coordinate the implementation of the RBMPs and Programme of Measures,
- coordinate the preliminary flood risk assessment, flood maps and the FRMPs for the International River Basin Districts if needed, prepare the two overarching FRMPs incorporating municipal FRMPs,
- coordinate public participation,
- issue permits,
- provide assistance regarding environmental policy in general and the WFD in particular,
- disseminate knowledge,
- coordinate international cooperation,
- Oversee water supply and waste water management.

The Danish Environmental Protection Agency, a technical agency under the Ministry of Environment and Food, is responsible for water management.

Regional

No water competencies were identified at regional level.

Local

Municipalities:

- carry out operational responsibilities for water management,
- implement most of the intervention programmes,
- develop local action plans regarding water management, based on the RBMPs,
- prepare and implement municipal FRMPs,
- own water supply and waste water treatment companies (other water service providers are owned directly by consumers)

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environmental Protection and Energy \(Miljø- og Fødevarerministeriet\)](#)
- Danish Environmental Protection Agency (Miljøstyrelsen) [Ministry of Climate, Energy, and Utilities](#) (Klima-, Energi og Bygningsministeriet)

Regional

- Regional authorities – regions
- Regional Water Councils

Local

- Local authorities (*Kommunerne*)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Denmark](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Denmark](#)

- [Ministry of the Environment and Food of Denmark](#)
- [OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: Denmark 2019](#) (OECD)
- [Final report. The implementation of the Water Framework Directive, a focused comparison of governance arrangements to improve water quality](#) (Institute for Management Research Radboud University)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “Denmark should continue to improve cooperation in RBD and ensure transparency regarding coordination of the technical aspects of the WFD such as ensuring a harmonized approach and a coordinated Programme of Measures in order to ensure the timely achievement of the WFD objectives.”

Assessment: this could require efforts from all levels of authority to further their cooperation and ensure a clear repartition of competencies.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The municipal FRMPs were reviewed as part of the FRMP assessment, thus the recommendations made impact the municipalities. Recommendations include providing more information on the development process, costs, prioritisation, monitoring, climate change, coordination with the WFD and other legislation, public consultations, and the Strategic Environmental Assessment. These recommendations may require municipalities to include information about procedures already in place, or it may require municipalities to first put these processes in place, and then report on them (the latter requiring more effort on the part of the municipalities).

One key recommendation suggested greater cooperation among the municipalities themselves and with the national authorities in order to have a more unified and consistent approach to the municipal FRMPs. This would impact municipalities as they would have to spend more time and resources on coordination, and potentially change the processes by which they produce the FRMPs. At the same time, this would be an opportunity for the municipalities to learn good practices from other municipalities, utilise economies of scale where appropriate, and ensure more coherent water management.

Estonia

Central

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) and its Water Department is the main institution for water management. This includes:

- overseeing the preparation and implementation the River Basin Management plans and Floods Risk Management plans,
- enforcement of regulations,
- economic analysis,
- eliciting public participation,
- coordination of WFD implementation.

The Estonian Environment Agency (part of MoC) is responsible for:

- the monitoring and assessment of groundwater and surface water,
- pressure and impact analysis.

The Estonian Environmental Board is responsible for:

- the implementation of RBMP measures.

The Estonian Environmental Research Centre (part of MoE) is responsible for:

- chemical and physico-chemical analysis of surface water, ground and waste water, and rain water,
- assessing the performance of water treatment plants and environmental impact of accidents.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of the Environment are responsible for drinking water.

Local

Local authorities:

- organise the supply of water and sewerage,
- restrict industrial use of water of drinking water quality where needed to satisfy the domestic needs of the population,
- manage the utilisation of natural resources (including bodies of water).

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of the Environment](#) (Water Department, Marine Environment Department and Fisheries Department)
- [Estonian Environment Agency](#)
- [Estonian Environmental Board](#)
- [Estonian Environmental Research Centre](#)
- [Ministry of Social Affairs](#)

Local

- Local government/authorities

Sources

- [Estonia Water Act](#)
- [Local Government Organisation Act](#)
- [Public Water Supply and Sewerage Act](#)
- [Ministry of Environment Estonia](#)
- [Estonian Environment Agency](#)
- [Estonian Environmental Research Centre](#)
- [Ministry of Rural Affairs](#)
- [Environmental Board](#)
- [Environmental Inspectorate](#)
- [FRESHWATER COUNTRY PROFILE Estonia](#)
- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plans - Member State: Estonia](#)
- [Assessment of the First Flood Risk Management Plans - Member State: Estonia](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

No impacts were identified at LRA level.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

No impacts were identified at LRA level

Finland

Central

Ministry of the Environment

- prepare national objectives and legislation for water protection and river basin management,
- implements the Water Framework Directive and the EU Marine Strategy,
- approve water resource management plans and assess their implementation,
- assess the water bodies' conditions and factors affecting them,
- carry out international water protection cooperation.

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry

- Prepare legislation relating to the water economy,
- prepare and implement legislation on water supply and services, dam safety and basic drainage,
- implement agreements on frontier rivers (transboundary watercourses).

Finnish Environment Institute (SYKE)

- monitor waters,
- undertake societal and economic assessments for water-related decision-making,
- development of solutions for the use, management and protection of water resources.

Regional State Administrative Agencies

- issue licences and permits (e.g. for water abstraction, dredging and filling of a water area, laying water and sewage pipes).

Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment (ELY Centres)

- prepare RBMPs and FRMPs
- take responsibility for regional implementation and tasks of the central government on environment and national resources,
- support SYKE in the monitoring of water status,
- supervise adherence to the water permits granted by AVI,

- promote flood protection and prevention,
- supervise dam safety,
- support the development of water services and sewerage and supervision of water supply.

Regional

Regional Councils:

- elaborate and implement local development plans.
- organise regional land use planning and lead flood working groups.

Åland:

- the regional government is the competent authority responsible for the implementation of the WFD in the territory of this region, supported by six government departments. The regional government formally adopts the RBMP

Local

Municipalities:

- issue and supervise environmental permits by municipal environmental protection authorities,
- develop water services and sewerage in their territories,
- monitor the quality of drinking and bathing water,
- take part in river basin management planning and flood working groups.

Responsible ministries/bodies

- [Ministry of the Environment](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry](#)
- [Finnish Environment Institute](#)
- [Regional State Administrative Agencies](#)
- [Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment](#)
- Regional Councils
- Municipalities

Sources

- [Ministry of the Environment - Surface waters and groundwaters](#)
- [Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry - Water](#)
- [Finnish Environment Institute - Water](#)
- [Regional State Administrative Agencies - The environment](#)
- [Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment - Environment](#)
- [SEI, 2013, Water Governance in Europe Insights from Spain, the UK, Finland and Estonia](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “Based on the prevalence of local or sub-basin drought spells as one of the effects of climate change, Finland should re-consider preparing drought management plans where appropriate.”

Assessment: LRAs may be involved in the preparation of drought management plans and, once drafted, should implement the relevant provisions. While this may require additional resources and expertise, especially during the preparation of such plans, this is an opportunity for LRAs to design drought mitigation measures that suit local conditions. Long-term, such measures should improve conditions in the area, potentially with economic and social advantages

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Recommendation: “A broader set of interested parties should be actively involved in the preparation of the FRMPs, including for example representatives of nature protection NGOs, fisheries as well as relevant industry.”

Assessment: As leads of the flood working groups, Regional Councils could consider involving different types of stakeholders in these groups. LRAs may be required to contribute more resources (especially time), however, greater coordination with other stakeholders provides an opportunity to remove inefficiencies while enhancing the quality of the planning/implementation process.

France

Central

The central government is responsible for:

- the development and implementation of water legislation ,
- developing national water policy and addressing common issues across river basins,
- coordination of cooperation on water management with neighbouring countries and at international level.

Regional

Regional councils are represented on the river basin committees (*comités de bassin*), which set river basin objectives, adopt the RBMPs and FRMPs and provide coordination among elected bodies and stakeholders.

The prefect coordinators of the river basins give final approval to the RBMPs adopted by the river basin committees. They coordinate water management in their river basins, including enforcement of water regulations.

The Regional directorates for the environment, planning and housing (DREAL) support the authorities on water management, including monitoring of water bodies.

The water agencies provide technical and scientific support at river-basin level, including for the preparation of RBMPs. Moreover, they provide financial resources for implementing the Programmes of Measures.

Local

Municipalities are responsible for:

- local implementation of water policies and plans, including local water management projects,
- managing drinking water supply, municipal sewerage and waste water treatment (either directly via municipally owned companies or delegated to private operators),
- local water protection and flood prevention measures.

Municipalities can join together in inter-municipal unions (*Syndicat intercommunaux des eaux*) to manage common water services or undertake other water management activities.

Municipalities and inter-municipal unions are represented on the river basin committees.

Municipalities participate in Local Water Commissions (*Commission locale de l'eau*) together with water users and stakeholders. These Commissions develop local water plans, (*Schéma d'Aménagement et de Gestion des Eaux*).

Municipalities and inter-municipality groups participate in river contracts that implement measures for the RBMPs, FRMPs and lower-level plans.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry for the Ecological and Inclusive Transition](#) (*Ministère de la Transition Ecologique et Solidaire*)
- [Comite National de l'eau](#) (Comité National de l'Eau)

Regional

- Regional councils
- Regional authorities (Directions Régionales de l'Environnement, de l'Aménagement et du Logement - DREAL)
- Prefect Coordinators (Préfets Coordonnateurs de bassin)
- [Water Agencies](#) (Agences de l'eau)
- River Basin Committees (Comités de Bassin)

Local

- Municipalities (Municipalités)
- Local Water Commissions

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of France](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of France](#)
- [Mise en application de la directive cadre sur l'eau, Onema, Les Agences de l'eau \(eaufrance\)](#)
- [OECD Environmental Performance Reviews: France 2016](#) (OECD)

- [Water Management](#) (Eau France)
- [Compétences des conseils départementaux et régionaux dans le domaine de l'eau](#) (Agence de l'eau Adour-Garonne)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The regions have an important role in implementing the RBMPs, so many recommendations, including technical ones, would impact them. The recommendations include improving monitoring and water assessment methodologies (especially concerning hydromorphological quality elements), undertaking cost-effective analyses, reporting to the European Commission in a timely manner, developing drought management plans.

Recommendation: “France should continue to improve international cooperation, including coordinated assessments of the technical aspects of the WFD such as ensuring a harmonized approach for status assessment and a coordinated Programme of Measures in order to ensure the timely achievement of the WFD objectives.

Assessment: A more active involvement of regional authorities bordering neighbouring Member States and third countries could improve international cooperation and assist to a more harmonised approach with the River Basin.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The regions have an important role in implementing the FRMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, would impact them. The recommendations include the greater information on the development of measures and their link to objectives, the improvement of the methodologies in terms of costs and benefits and an inclusion of the costs of measures and potential funding for its implementation.

Recommendation: “The FRMPs should provide more detailed information on the prior steps, including summary maps and text regarding the APSFRs and references where they can be accessed. It is also important to ensure that FRMPs are continuously available to all concerned and the public in an accessible format, including digitally.”

Assessment: LRAs could be called on to ensure the FRMPs are publicly accessible, including online. This is not expected to have a large impact on the LRAs, but would be a step towards better engagement with the community. It

would also be an opportunity to ensure all local flood and Flood Directive initiatives are up to date and communicated to the community.

Germany

Central

- formulates recommendations in the form of guidelines for the implementation of the WFD and the FD by the Länder (through a Working Group),
- acts as a fora for Länder on transboundary issues,
- updates and optimizes the scientific bases and measures for safe drinking water,
- for some river basins, a common inter-land RBMP (B-level plan) is prepared through collaboration of more than one Länder. Implementation remains with the competent Länder.

Regional

- coordination and strategic direction of water management at lower levels,
- preparing the RBMP and the FRMP,
- licencing polluting industry installations,
- public participation,
- reporting and measurement stations.

Intermediate level – Kreise

- water resource planning,
- household waste collection and disposal,
- permitting,
- monitoring of rivers.

Local Authorities

- procedures under water management law,
- monitoring of (smaller) water bodies and discharges,
- providing expert advice,
- maintenance and management of sewerage and waste water treatment,
- drinking water supply.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [German Working Group on water issues of the Federal States and the Federal Government](#)
- [German Environment Agency \(Umweltbundesamt – UBA\)](#)

Regional

- Länder Ministries
- Länder Environmental Agencies

Intermediate Level

- Regierungsbezirke
- Kreise and kreisfreie Städte

Local

- Gemeiden

Sources

- [First River Basin Management Plan- Member State: Germany](#)
- [Second River Basin Management Plans - Member State: Germany](#)
- [First Flood Risk Management Plans - Member State: Germany](#)
- [Report of the German Federal Government to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development 2016](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The competent authorities of the Länder are responsible for the development of RBMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, are addressed to them. Those recommendations include, among others, improvement of monitoring, better justification of the exemptions included in the Articles 4(4) and (5) of the Directive and a more comprehensive gap assessment for diffuse pollutant loads. Several recommendations will require greater coordination among Länder, such as the following:

Recommendation: “In groundwater bodies shared by different Länder, coordinated methodologies and measures should be better described. The way national guidance is used should be explained in the different RBMPs.”

Assessment: Länder are responsible for preparing the RBMPs and coordinating with neighbouring authorities. Developing or communicating transparent methodologies and measures are likely to require few resources from the LRAs themselves, especially because national guidance is in place. However, improved coordination will increase efficiency and potentially reduce incoherence or inconsistency between neighbouring authorities.

Recommendation: Germany should consider “developing Drought Management Plans for areas more at risk of drought”.

Assessment: Some Länder in Germany are more prone to drought due to their geographical location and geomorphological features. Intermediate and local bodies in those areas may be required to develop or contribute to drought management plans. While this may require resources from the LRAs, especially in terms of time and expertise, this is an opportunity for LRAs to address local drought concerns in a comprehensive way.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The competent authorities of the Länder are responsible for the development of FRMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, are addressed to them. Those recommendations include the development of measurable objectives on the adverse effects of flooding, a clearer definition of the measures implored in the plans and of the criteria of selection used. The impacts on the LRAs will thus depend on the number of recommendations to be implemented, and the ease at which they can be implemented.

Greece

Central

The Special Secretariat for Water (SSW) under the Ministry of Environment and Energy are responsible for:

- coordinating water management issues,
- implementing the WFD,
- monitoring the quality and quantity of water,

- overseeing and regulating waste water and reuse and flood management,
- engaging the public,
- approving all regional RBMPs and FRMPs.

The National Council for Water (NCW) is responsible for:

- developing the national strategy on the management and protection of Greek waters
- approving the national RBMP and FRMP prepared by the SSW

Regional

Regional authorities are responsible for:

- licensing discharges of industrial waste water and municipal waste water from treatment plants.

The Regional Water Departments are responsible for:

- overseeing or preparing the preparation the RBMPs and the FRMPs in their Region. The Regional Water Departments can transfer that competence to the Special Secretariat for Water, which was the case in the previous cycle of implementation for all but two Regions,
- engaging the public in the preparation of the RBMP and FRMP.

Local

The Municipalities are responsible for:

- participating in public consultations for the preparation of the RBMPs and FRMPs,
- protecting and managing water resources from extensive fisheries and pollution,
- constructing, maintaining and managing local water supply, irrigation, and sewage systems.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environment and Energy](#) (Υπουργείο Περιβάλλοντος και Ενέργειας)
- [Special Secretariat for Water](#) (Ειδική Γραμματεία Υδάτων)

Regional

- Regional Water Departments (Περιφερειακές Διευθύνσεις Υδάτων)
- Regional environmental departments

Local

- Municipalities (Δήμοι)

Sources

- [Assessment of the first River Basin Management Plan of Greece](#)
- [Ministry of Environment and Energy](#)
- [Special Secretariat for Water](#)
- [Greece: Voluntary National Review of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development implementation.](#)
- [Law 3199/2003 transposing the Water Framework Directive \(ΦΕΚ Α'280/9.12.2003\)](#)
- [Ministerial Decision HP 31822/1542/E103 transposing the Floods Directive \(ΦΕΚ Β' 1108/21.07.2010\)](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The Greek RBMPs were not reported on time and have therefore not yet been included in the Commission's assessment.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The Greek FRMPs were not reported on time and have therefore not yet been included in the Commission's assessment.

Hungary

Central

Government authorities are responsible for:

- Development and approval of water legislation,
- Preparation and approval of the national RBMP and FRMP,
- Implementation of the relevant measures, including coordination of entities involved,
- monitoring of groundwater and surface water,
- Enforcement of certain water-related regulations,
- Participation in the implementation of international agreements concerning the Danube international RBD and related sub-basins,
- Setting of prices and tariffs for water use,
- Implementation the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive and regulation of drinking water quality.

Regional

Regional authorities are responsible for:

- The implementation of measures as specified in a national level (especially concerning floods),
- The monitoring and assessment of the status of the waters, including pressure and impacts analysis,
- Participation in the preparation of the RBMP and FRMP and the development of the relevant measures,
- Support for the engagement of the public,
- Enforcement of regulations at regional level.

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- Drinking water supply and infrastructure as well as sewerage for and treatment of municipal waste water (these services are directly managed by publicly owned companies under contract to the municipalities),
- Preventing flood damage.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [General Directorate of Water Management](#)

Regional

- Regional Water Directorates
- Counties (*megyék*)

Local

- Local authorities

Sources

- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan of Hungary](#)
- [Assessment of the First Flood Risk Management Plan of Hungary](#)
- [Hungary's National Flood Risk Management Plan](#)
- [Hungary: Voluntary National Review of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Implementation](#)
- [Maviz \(Hungarian water utility association\)](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The Regional Water Directorates have some responsibilities with regard to monitoring and preparing the RBMP. The recommendations may either directly or indirectly impact the Regional Directorates as they carry out these tasks – insufficient monitoring was identified as an issue in several instances in the report, and these deficiencies may require more frequent or detailed monitoring, which may require more resources from the Directorates.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The Regional Water Directorates have some responsibilities with regard to monitoring and preparing the FRMP. The recommendations may either directly or indirectly impact the Regional Directorates as they carry out these tasks.

Ireland

Central

The National government

- environmental legislation including freshwater and marine legislation.

The [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government](#)

- drafting the overall water policy, including the River Basin Management and Flood Risk Management Plans.

[The office of Public Works](#)

- coordinates the implementation regarding the Flood Risk Management,
- works with Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and local authorities.

[Environmental Protection Agency](#)

- prepares river basin management plan templates
- gathers information on programme measures and input from local authorities.
- provides reports on key indicators on health of waters.

[Irish Water](#), accountable to the EPA and the [Commission for Energy Regulation](#)

- manages water and wastewater services.

Regional

Regional assemblies

- coordinate the implementation of legislation at regional and local levels with the technical support of Environment Protection Agency (EPA) and the Local Authority Waters Programme

Local and national

The [Local Authority Waters Programme](#)

- brings together local authorities and state agencies to implement RBMPs, promoting the implementation of mitigation measures, providing scientific assessments of water bodies and encouraging citizen engagement at local level.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government](#)
- [The Water Forum](#)
- [The office of Public Works](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Regional

- Regional assemblies

Local

- [Local Authority Waters Programme](#)

Sources

- [Government of Ireland](#)
- [The Office of Public Works](#)
- [Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government,](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency](#)
- [Local Authority Waters Programme](#)
- [EPA Catchments Website, The Water Policy Advisory Committee](#)
- OECD, [Ireland Country Profile](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Not applicable – Ireland did not report in time, and there is currently no WFD implementation report.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Not applicable – Ireland did not report in time, and there is currently no Floods implementation report.

Italy

Central

The central government is responsible for:

- national water legislation, including acts to transpose and implement the Water Framework Directive (WFD), Floods Directive and other EU water legislation,
- coordination of the implementation of the WFD, Floods Directive and other EU water legislation,
- development of methods for setting water tariffs and overseeing tariffs in place.

Regional

Regional authorities and the autonomous provinces of Trento and Bolzano/Bozen:

- are represented on the board (*Conferenza istituzionale permanente*) of the river basin district (RBD) authorities of RBDs spanning more than one region,
- prepare regional Water Protection Plans (*Piani di tutela delle acque*) to support and implement RBMPs,
- undertake monitoring of groundwater and surface water,
- enforce water legislation,
- contribute to the RBMPs (prepared by the RBD authorities),
- lead the preparation of FRMPs for Units of Management managed at regional level (often under the coordination of RBD authorities),
- contribute to the preparation of FRMPs for interregional Units of Management (UoMs),

- implement RBMP and FRMP measures at regional level,
- identify and oversee water service areas (*Ambiti territoriali omogenei*), whose agencies in turn oversee water service companies and approve their tariffs.

Local

Provinces

- Roles vary by region and are delegated by the regions.

Municipalities

- Ownership of water service companies that manage drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment (ownership structures vary across the country),
- Management of local water issues,
- Implementation of RBMP and FRMP measures at local level,
- Participate in river contracts (*contratti di fiume*) for local, participatory management of water bodies.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environment, Land and Sea](#)
- [Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research \(ISPRA\)](#)
- [Italian Regulatory Authority for Energy, Networks and Environment \(ARERA\)](#) – supervises water services

Regional

- Regions

Local

- Local authorities

Sources

- [European Commission, Second River Basin Management Plans - Member State: Italy](#)
- [European Commission, First Flood Risk Management Plans - Member State: Italy](#)
- [EurEau](#)
- [Tavolo Nazionale dei Contratti di Fiume](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

In two regions – Sardinia and Sicily – the RBMPs are prepared at regional level: consequently, these regions will need to address all relevant recommendations. As all of Italy’s regions are responsible for monitoring water bodies and also for preparing Water Protection Plans that support implementation of the RBMPs, all regions will need to address significant parts of the recommendations.

Recommendation: Italy is encouraged to “harmonise different regional approaches, in particular for the definition of the significance of pressures”.

Assessment: While RBMPs are prepared by RBD authorities, much of the work to monitor and assess water bodies and to implement measures is carried out at regional level. Implementing this recommendation will require the regions in mainland Italy to cooperate more closely via the RBD authorities (this is also reinforced by recent changes in national law).

Recommendation: Italy is encouraged to “ensure that a Drought Management Plan is adopted also for the Sicily RBD”.

Assessment: Sicily is one of the regions of Italy that are more prone to drought due to its geographical location and its geomorphological features. A targeted, regional management plan that will address the specific needs of the area is needed: this should be prepared by regional authorities.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Italy has designated 47 Units of Management for the FD, and many of the FRMPs are prepared at regional level: consequently, regions will need to implement the Commission’s recommendations. In addition, the regions in mainland Italy will need to cooperate more strongly within RBDs on flood risk management.

Latvia

Central

The Ministry of Environmental Protection and Regional Development is in charge of:

- enforcement of water regulations,
- coordination of public participation,
- implementation of measures and coordination of bodies involved in their implementation,
- support for the monitoring of surface water and groundwater, pressure and impact analysis, support for the preparation of the plans and Programmes of Measures,
- oversight of the Regional Environmental Boards (responsible for water use permits),
- implementation and supervision of drinking water and sanitation improvement projects.

The Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre (LEGMC) is in charge of:

- monitoring and assessment of groundwater and surface water quality and quantity, economic analysis, pressure and impact analysis,
- preparation of the FRMPs, RBMPs and Programmes of Measures and implementation of measures,
- support for public participation,
- support for River Basin management,
- support for the assessment of flood risks,

The Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology is in charge of:

- monitoring of surface waters,
- supporting the assessment of status of surface waters and pressure and impact analysis.

The Public Utilities Commission is responsible for the regulation of water service companies.

Regional

N/A

Local

Municipalities are responsible for:

- supervision and management of water use, drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment (and ownership of the companies providing these water services)
- Local water protection
- implementation of specific RBMP and FRMP measures

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Regional Development and Local Government](#)
- [Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre](#)
- [Latvian Institute of Aquatic Ecology](#)

Local

- Municipalities

Sources

- [Latvian Environment, Geology and Meteorology Centre](#)
- [State Environmental Services](#)
- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plans - Latvia](#)
- [Recommendation Annex to the Commission Implementation report on WFD and FD](#)
- [WAREG \(European Water Regulators\)](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local authorities have been identified.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local authorities have been identified.

Lithuania

Central

The central Government is responsible for:

- legislation and regulation for water management and sustainability,
- coordination and administration of the River Basin Districts,
- development and approval of RBMPs and FRMPs and their measures,
- negotiation of international agreements for international river basin districts and coordination of their implementation,
- regulation of drinking water and implementation of the EU Drinking Water Directive, including testing of drinking water quality,
- coordination of public consultation,
- monitoring, characterisation, pressure analysis and classification of the status of groundwater and surface bodies,
- issuing of permits and control of water abstractions and wastewater discharges (including priority substances),
- organisation and coordination of water supply and wastewater treatment services.

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- water management at a local level,
- supply of drinking water and monitoring of sewerage systems.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#)
- Lithuanian Hydrometeorological Service (LHS)

- Lithuanian Geological Survey (LGS)
- Regional Environmental Protection Departments (REPDs)

Local

- Municipalities

Sources

- [Implementation Report on WFD 1st RBMP - Lithuania](#)
- <https://www.wareg.org/members.php?q=view&id=15>
- [Assessment of the First Flood Risk Management Plan of Lithuania](#)
- [Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Lithuania](#)
- [UNECE assessment report](#)
- [Environmental Protection Agency\(EPA\)](#)
- [Lithuania: Voluntary National review of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Implementation](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The RBMPs were not reported on time and have therefore not been included in the Commission's assessment.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Recommendation: “The public consultation process should be strengthened and greater active involvement of stakeholders ensured.”

Assessment: LRAs may be called on to play a larger role in consultations, either by participating themselves or by encouraging local stakeholders to do so. This may require LRAs to invest resources, for example time and expertise, however, greater involvement in consultations at local or national level will ensure plans are tailored to local and regional needs. This can not only facilitate implementation but may also have economic and social implications.

Luxembourg

Central

The Ministry of Sustainable Development and Infrastructure is responsible for:

- overall water policy,
- enforcement of water regulations,
- coordination of the implementation of measures,
- funding for environmental protection projects,
- establishment of administrative entities for water management,
- coordination of government action for the protection of water resources,
- national drinking water supply policy, including guidance on pricing policy and identification of drinking water protection zones,
- flood risk management.

The Water Management Agency is responsible for:

- monitoring and assessment of groundwater and surface waters,
- conducting pressure and impact analyses,
- the preparation of RBMPs and FRMPs,
- coordination of public participation,
- supporting the implementation of Floods Directive and preparing FRMPs.

Local

Municipalities are responsible for:

- implementation of government policies at local level,
- local water management and protection,
- implementation of water services (drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment),
- issuing of abstraction and discharge permits.

Flood Management Partnerships (voluntary association of relevant local authorities, official bodies and other stakeholders) actively participate in drafting the FRMP.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development](#) (*Ministère de l'Environnement, du Climat et du Développement Durable*)
- [Water Management Agency](#) (*Administration de la gestion de l'eau*)

Local

- Municipalities (*Communes, Gemeng, Gemeinde*)

Sources

- Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Luxembourg
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Luxembourg](#)
- [OECD Country Profile for Luxembourg](#)
- [EurEau](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local authorities have been identified.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local authorities have been identified.

Malta

Central

The [Ministry for Energy and Water Management](#) is responsible for:

- the development of Water Policy and Energy and Water Services.

The [Energy and Water Agency](#) and the [Environmental and Resources Authority](#) are responsible for:

- formulation and implementation of the Government's national policies in the energy and water sectors (Energy and Water Agency),
- monitoring and assessment of status of groundwater (Energy and Water Agency) and surface water (Environment and Resources Authority),
- pressure and impact analysis, economic analysis,
- preparation of the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP, which includes also flood risk management) and Programme of Measures,
- coordination public participation,
- implementation of measures,
- coordination of implementation,
- enforcement of regulation (Environment and Resources Authority).

The [Regulator for Energy and Water Services](#) is responsible for regulating water services including:

- the regulation of the national utilities (e.g. Water Services Corporation) and service providers for water,
- implementation of grant schemes and licences.

The [Water Services Corporation](#) is responsible for the complete drinking and waste water cycle from production and distribution of water, to the collection and treatment of wastewater.

Regional

No competencies identified at the local level concerning water management

Local

No competencies identified at the local level concerning water management

Responsible ministries/bodies

- [Ministry for Energy and Water Management](#)
- [Energy and Water Agency](#)
- [Regulator for Energy and Water Services](#)
- [Water Services Corporation](#)
- [Environmental and Resources Authority](#)

Sources

- [European Commission - Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan of Malta](#)
- [Ministry for Energy and Water Management](#)
- [Local Government](#)
- [Local Government Act of 23 July 1993](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified.

The Netherlands

Central

Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management:

- is responsible for the national policy framework and the strategic objectives for water management in the Netherlands,
- produces the National Water Plan (*Nationaal Waterplan*) containing the RBMPs and the FRMPs,
- prepares the PoMs as part of the RBMPs,
- takes responsibility for national water investment and management,
- supports surface water monitoring,
- supports the implementation of measures,
- takes responsibility for major water infrastructure (including dykes/flood protection),
- chairs the Water Steering Group (*Stuurgroep Water*), responsible for coordination with the *Rijkswaterstaat*, regions, municipalities and Water Authorities.

Regional

Provinces:

- translate national water policy into regional measures,
- monitor and assess the status of groundwater,
- enforce regulations,
- undertake pressure and impact analysis,
- coordinate public participation,
- implement and coordinate implementation of measures,
- take responsibility for spatial planning, including permitting for flood protection infrastructure,
- in some cases, ownership of water service companies

Water Boards:

- undertake operational water management,
- oversee and monitor water quantity and quality (including sewerage treatment and drinking water purification),
- develop water management plans for the water quality which feed into the RBMPs,
- work with municipalities and regional offices,
- gather and balance the views and interests of stakeholders represented in their governance structures,
- take responsibility for water infrastructure not managed at national level (including dykes/flood protection),

Local

Municipalities:

- provide water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment infrastructure, managed via water companies by municipalities,
- take responsibility for groundwater in urban areas,
- support coordination for the implementation of WFD measures,
- take responsibility for coordination and crisis management during emergencies though safety regions (*veiligheidsregio's*) defined by cooperation structures between municipalities,

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management ([*Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Waterstaat*](#)), specifically the Directorate-General for Public Works and Water Management ([*Rijkswaterstaat*](#))
- National Water Authority

Regional

- [Regional water authorities](#) (*waterschap, wetterskip or hoogheemraadschap*)
- Provinces (*provincies*)

Local

- Municipalities

Sources

- [Evaluation of the Water Framework Directive in the Netherlands; costs and benefits](#)
- [Assessment of cost recovery through water pricing](#)
- [The EU Water Framework Directive: A multi-dimensional analysis of implementation and domestic impact](#)
- [The implementation of the Water Framework Directive](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan for the Netherlands](#)
- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan for the Netherlands](#)
- [Waterwet 2009](#)
- [Nationaal Waterplan 2016-2021](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

RBMPs are produced at national level, so implementing the recommendations will not be the responsibility of the LRAs. However, the LRAs provide a great deal of input into the RBMPs, so this could be an opportunity for LRAs to investigate if there can be improvements in the monitoring and procedural information they provide to national authorities. While this may require more

resources on their part, it could result in a more regional/local focus for the plans, making them more specific to local needs.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

FRMPs are produced at national level, so implementing the recommendations will not be the responsibility of the LRAs. However, the LRAs have a great deal of input into the FRMPs, so this could be an opportunity for LRAs to investigate what information they can provide the national authorities. While this may require more resources on their part, it could result in a more regional/local focus for the plans, making them more specific to local needs.

Poland

Central

The National Water Agency ([Gospodarstwo Wody Polskie](#)) is responsible for:

- supervising:
 - National Board for Water Management in Warsaw,
 - Regional Water Management Boards,
 - water basin management boards,
 - water supervisory boards.
- holding ownership rights over state-owned waters,
- establishing and collects water use fees and taxes,
- supervising preparation and implementation of River Basin Management Plans and the Flood Risk Management Plans and the National Programme for Urban Wastewater treatment.

The [Ministry of Environment](#) is responsible for:

- adopting the National Environmental Policy,
- overseeing several institutions with relevance for water issues, including the Chief Inspectorate Of Environmental Protection ([Główny Inspektorat Ochrony Środowiska](#)) which monitors the state of environment including the quality of water and the National Fund of Environmental Protection and Water Management ([Narodowy Fundusz Ochrony Środowiska i Gospodarki Wodnej](#)) which provides funding for environmental investments, including in the water sector. Ministry of Maritime Economy

and Inland Navigation ([Ministerstwo Gospodarki Morskiej i Żeglugi Śródlądowej](#)) deals with maritime issues, fishing and inland navigation.

Regional

The Regional Water Management Boards (RWMBs) are responsible for water management in the water regions. Among their activities, the Boards:

- identify significant pressures and assess their impact on the status of surface and ground water in the region,
- develop terms of water use in the water region,
- develop the economic analysis of water use in the region,
- prepare flood studies in the water region,
- develop draft plans for flood protection,
- coordinate activities related to the protection against floods and drought,
- approve tariffs for municipal water supply, sewage collection and treatment,
- provide opinions on draft regulations for water supply and sewage disposal
- resolve disputes between water and sewage companies and recipients of their services.
- issue consents for the use of water (depending on the type of the undertaking, the consents may also be issued by water basin management boards or by the National Water Agency).

Voivodeships-level institutions are responsible for:

- regional implementation and enforcement of national water policy
- permits for investment, including pollution discharges
- water monitoring

Counties have a limited role in water management including supervision and control over the activities of water companies.

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- protection of drinking water sources, in cooperation with the regional water authorities,
- implementation of specific measures set out in the RBMP and FRMP as well as in the National Programme for Urban Wastewater Treatment,

- ownership of companies responsible for water supply and wastewater treatment.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Gospodarstwo Wody Polskie](#) (National Water Agency)
- [Ministry of Environment](#)

Regional

- Voivodeships;
- Regional Water Management Boards
- Regional Inspectorates for Environmental Protection carry out monitoring of water quality

County level

- Counties (powiats)

Local

- Gminas and towns

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Poland](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Poland](#)
- [Gospodarstwo Wody Polskie](#)
- Water Management in Poland 2018 ([Zarządzanie zasobami wody w Polsce 2018](#))
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “Poland should continue prioritising the use of green infrastructure and/or natural water retention measures that provide a range of environmental (improvements in water quality, flood protection, habitat conservation etc.), social and economic benefits which can be in many cases more cost-effective than grey infrastructure.”

Assessment: LRAs could play a role in promoting green infrastructure and natural water retention measures via their planning documents and public infrastructure competencies.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Recommendation: “Climate change should be further integrated into the objectives and measures of the FRMPs.”

Assessment: LRA’s, while implementing the specific measures of the FRMPs, should make sure that these measures integrate climate considerations to the highest possible extent and that the potential synergies between flood risk management and climate objectives are used. LRAs can play a role in addressing both climate change and flood protection, for example via local adaptation and flood plans.

Portugal

Central

Central authorities:

- manage freshwater and coastal zones (as well as marine waters),
- prepare and approve FRMPs and RBMPs,
- implement water management in river basins via River Basin District Administrations (which are bodies of the Portuguese Environment Agency at regional level),
- supervise the quality of both drinking water and waste water services,
- regulate waste water treatment, discharge control and protection of water resources, by setting environmental standards, and the licensing/control.

Regional

Regional authorities:

- advise and offer technical assistance during the development of RBMPs.

The autonomous regions of Azores and Madeira have additional powers, including:

- prepare and approve RBMPs and FRMPs,

- responsibility for water supply (Azores).

Local

Municipalities:

- contribute to the drafting of the FRMPs and RBMPs,
- take responsibility for water supply and sewerage, including via municipally owned companies and multi-municipal systems,
- take responsibility for storm water drainage.

Multi-municipal systems, jointly owned by Águas de Portugal (a national holding company) and the municipalities in their areas, are responsible for:

- the abstraction, treatment and main regional distribution systems of drinking water,
- regional sewerage and waste water treatment.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- Portuguese Environment Agency ([Agência Portuguesa do Ambiente](#), APA)
- River Basin District Administrations (RBDAs)
- [Águas de Portugal](#) (co-owner of water services, supporting municipal governments)
- [Entidade Reguladora de Serviços de Águas e Resíduos](#)

Regional

- River Basin District Councils (multi-stakeholder forums)

Local

- Municipalities

Sources

- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan for Portugal](#)
- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan for Portugal](#)

- [Water policy\(ies\) in Portugal: Inertia and challenges within the European framework](#)
- [Planos de Gestão de Região Hidrográfica - 2.º Ciclo](#)
- [Planos de Gestão dos Riscos de Inundações](#)
- [Águas de Portugal](#)
- [Artigo 4.º - Comissão Nacional da Gestão dos Riscos de Inundações](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Regional authorities for the autonomous regions (Azores and Madeira) are responsible for preparing the RBMPs. The impact of the recommendations on these regional authorities will depend on whether the recommendations are applicable to the specific RBMPs. In those instances where improvement is needed, it may require additional resources from the regional authorities. For example, it is recommended that “The island RBDs should ensure that they gather more information on the pressures from Priority Substances and (potential) River Basin Specific Pollutants, in order to determine the measures needed to combat them”. Implementing the recommendations, however, will result in more coherent and robust RBMPs, which will improve water management in the region.

For mainland Portugal, the RBMPs are prepared at national level, and the recommendations concern mostly monitoring and methodology gaps. The impacts on local and regional authorities will be small.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Regional authorities for the autonomous regions (Azores and Madeira) are responsible for preparing the FRMPs. The impact of the recommendations on these regional authorities will depend on whether the recommendations are applicable to the specific FRMPs. In those instances where improvement is needed, it may require resources from the regional authorities; however, the end result will be more coherent and robust FRMPs, which will improve flood management in the region.

For mainland Portugal, the FRMPs are prepared at national level, meaning the impacts on local and regional authorities will be small, as none specifically refer to local or regional competencies.

Romania

Central

National Administration Romanian Waters (NARW), including the River Basin Administrations:

- monitors and assesses status of groundwater and surface water, economic analysis, pressure and impact analysis,
- prepares the RBMP and the PoM as well as the FRMPs,
- carries out public participation activities,
- implements measures in the PoM and the FRMPs,
- administers the dam and reservoir situated at the border between Romania and Moldova.

The Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests:

- drafts and enforces regulations,
- supervises the NARW.

The National Environment Protection Agency (NEPA) is responsible for regulation in the area of environmental protection including permitting.

Regional

- No specific water competencies were identified at regional level.

Local

The Municipalities, Towns and rural Communes are responsible for:

- water supply,
- sewerage and treatment of wastewater and pluvial waters,
- collective ownership of commercial Regional Operating Companies providing water services.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [National Administration Romanian Waters](#)

- [Ministry of the Environment, Waters and Forests](#)
- [National Environment Protection Agency](#)

Local

- Counties and municipalities
- Inter-communal Development Associations (IDAs)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Romania](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Romania](#)
- [National Administration ‘Romanian Waters’](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: Romania needs to improve the implementation of the requirements under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive in relation to the requirement of more stringent treatment of wastewaters for discharge into sensitive areas, and ensure investments to allow for appropriate treatment of waste water from big cities.

Assessment: Local authorities are responsible for sewerage and waste water treatment, so the impacts on LRAs could be quite significant if infrastructure needs to be upgraded or built. A more sophisticated sewerage system will also likely be more costly to maintain to a high level in the future.

Recommendation: Romania still needs to implement specific measures in its safeguard zones associated to Drinking Water Protected Areas. Moreover, Romania should set specific objectives for Protected Areas designed under the Habitats and Birds Directive as requested in previous recommendations.

Assessment: LRAs are responsible for drinking water supply, which means changes to supply could impact LRAs in the case that their current supply is affected by designated zones or areas.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

An as broad as possible set of interested parties should be actively involved in the preparation of the FRMPs and the FRMPs should indicate how the results of the public consultation were considered in the finalisation of the Plans.

Assessment: LRAs could become more actively involved in FRMP consultations, which will give them an opportunity to share their localised knowledge and promote local/regional issues, even if this may require more time and potentially other resources. The LRAs might also be called upon to promote the consultations and Flood Risks generally to the public.

Slovakia

Central

The Ministry of Environment is responsible for:

- preparing and coordinating the implementation of the RBMPs, PoMs and FRMPs,
- managing River Basin Districts,
- identifying water planning tasks,
- enforcing regulations,
- carrying out analyses of sub-basin characteristics and assessing the effects of human activities on surface water status and groundwater status,
- creating and implementing monitoring programmes for surface waters, groundwater and protected areas,
- ensuring public participation in the implementation of the Floods Directive and the WFD,
- issuing permits and plans for water abstraction and water use,
- monitoring and assessment of status of surface waters and groundwater,
- monitoring wastewater discharges and their impacts on the recipient bodies (through the Slovak Environment Inspectorate),
- overseeing water services (drinking water and waste water, including storm water),
- coordinating international cooperation on the management of transboundary RBDs.

Other ministries include:

- Ministry of Agriculture: oversees water for irrigation,
- Ministry of Economy: responsible for hydropower facilities,
- Ministry of Health: monitors drinking water and bathing water quality.

District offices of the state administration are responsible for:

- giving consent and opinions in administrative proceedings and in matters concerning transboundary waters,
- supervising water protection within the scope of their competence.

Regional

Self-governing regions do not have significant water management competencies.

Local

Municipalities:

- grant permits for the abstraction of surface water and groundwater and their use to households and construction projects,
- are responsible for drinking water supply, public sewers and waste water treatment (via municipally owned companies),
- perform state water protection supervision within the scope of its competence and imposes measures to remedy the identified deficiencies,
- regulate the use of small watercourses and other water bodies.

Responsible ministries/bodies

National

- [Ministry of Environment](#),
- [Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development](#),
- [Slovakian Environmental Inspection](#)
- [Water Research Institute \(WRI\)](#)
- Regions with delegated competences

Local

- Municipalities

Sources

- [Water Act \(last amended in 2019\)](#)
- [Reports on the Implementation of the 2nd RBMP and first Flood Risk Management Plans in Slovakia](#)

- [Ministry of Environment website](#)
- [EurEau](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified.

Recommendations in the FD implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local and regional authorities have been identified.

Slovenia

Central

The Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning of Slovenia is responsible for:

- monitoring of the status of groundwater and surface water,
- enforcement of regulations,
- pressure and impact analysis and economic analysis,
- preparation of RBMPs and PoM,
- coordination of public participation,
- implementation of measures,
- co-ordination of implementation.

Regional

N/A

Local

Local authorities are responsible for:

- protection of drinking water sources, in cooperation with the regional water authorities,
- implementation of specific measures set out in the RBMP and FRMP,

- drinking water supply and the collection and treatment of urban waste water (including supervision of service providers, often municipally owned companies).

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning](#)

Local

- Municipalities (občine)

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of Slovenia](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of Slovenia](#)
- [Ministry of the Environment and Spatial Planning](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Recommendation: “The use of exemptions under Article 4(7) needs to be based on a thorough assessment of all the steps as requested by the WFD, in particular an assessment of whether the project is of overriding public interest and whether the benefits to society outweigh the environmental degradation, and the absence of alternatives that would be a better environmental option. Furthermore, these projects may only be carried out when all practicable steps are taken to mitigate the adverse impact on the status/potential of the water bodies.”

Assessment: LRAs have a role in spatial planning, designing local and regional plans and strategies and providing various types of consents and opinions that are needed for implementation of projects which may potentially be detrimental for water resources. LRAs should ensure that any strategic and planning documents that are prepared with their involvement include appropriate safeguards against negative impacts on water; these impacts are avoided to the highest possible extent. Cases of overriding public interest should be well justified.

Recommendation: “Based on the prevalence of local drought in sub-basins, as one of the effects of climate change, Slovenia should consider preparing drought management plans where appropriate”.

Assessment: LRAs may be involved in the preparation of drought management plans and, once drafted, may be called on to implement relevant provisions. While this may require additional resources and expertise, especially during the preparation of such plans, this is an opportunity for LRAs to design drought mitigation measures that suit local conditions. In the long term, such measures should improve conditions in the area, potentially with economic and social advantages.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

No specific recommendations relevant for the competences of local authorities have been identified.

Spain

Competencies on freshwater management are highly decentralized, managed by River Basin Authorities for inter-regional river basins and by regional authorities for intra-regional river basins.

Central

State authorities:

- take responsibility for decision-making on fresh water, through consultation with the National Council on Water,
- approve RBMPs and FRMPs prepared by either regional or river basin authorities,
- manage conflicts between River Basin Authorities and other national-level issues (such as water transfers, flood management) detailed in the [National Hydrologic Plan](#),
- take responsibility for large-scale civil protection strategies and for coastal areas vulnerable to flood risk,
- undertake international cooperation, [with Portugal](#) ([under the Convention of Albufeira](#)) and [with France](#),
- undertake public participation at national level.

Regional

River Basin Authorities are responsible for inter-regional River Basins:

- manage river basins and prepare and implement RBMPs and FRMPs for inter-regional River Basins (determining objectives, managing resources, risk assessment, public consultation, monitoring),
- manage large-scale water users, such as agriculture or power generation,
- plan and build infrastructure according to requests from the central government,
- assist municipalities in implementing water-related projects.

The governing boards of these River Basin Authorities include representatives of the central government and of the regions within their territories.

Regional authorities are responsible for intra-regional River Basins:

- manage river basins and prepare and implement RBMPs and FRMPs for intra-regional river basins (determining objectives, managing resources, risk assessment, public consultation, monitoring),
- manage land and freshwater resources, civil protection.

Local

Municipalities:

- manage urban water supply and wastewater treatment (occasionally in collaboration with regional authorities),
- define the regulation and price to be paid for water users,
- manage water supply and wastewater treatment infrastructure and if applicable contract day to day management to private or semi-public enterprises,
- undertake urban planning and civil protection plans related to flood risk

Communities of users bring together local stakeholders (in particular agriculture) to resolve conflicts related to water use. Some of these bodies have deep historical roots, such as the Court of Water of the plains of Valencia (dating to the 10th century) and the Council of Wise Men of the plain of Murcia.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Ministry for the Ecologic Transition \(freshwater management section\)](#)
- [National Council on Water](#)

Regional

- [River Basin authorities](#)
- [Canary Islands water authority](#)
- [Balearic Islands RB authority](#)

Local

- Different local authorities (in charge of water supply and wastewater treatment)
- [Water Court of the plain of Valencia](#)
- [Council of Wise Men of the plain of Murcia](#)
- [Association of private or semi-public companies on water management](#)

Sources

- [Spanish Water Governance](#)
- [Assessment of the second RBMP and FRMP of Spain](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

Many of the RBMPs are prepared at regional level, which means the recommendations will likely impact at least those RBDs which have been identified as needing improvement. The impact on the regional authorities will depend on the number and severity of the recommendations pertaining to their RBMP, and whether the issue is a matter of reporting data/procedures already in place or whether new systems and methodologies are needed.

Many recommendations focused on improved monitoring, the establishment of specific measures, and a defined methodology. Addressing these recommendations would impact regional authorities; however, by doing so the regional authorities will be able to improve their water management, which will have positive impacts on water in the region.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

Many FRMPs are prepared at regional level, which means the recommendations will likely impact at least those RBDs which have been identified as needing improvement. The impact on the regional authorities will depend on the number and severity of the recommendations pertaining to their FRMP, and whether the issue is a matter of reporting data/procedures already in place or whether new systems and methodologies are needed. Implementing the recommendations will ensure the regional authorities have more robust and coherent FRMPs, which may improve cooperation between regions, and may ultimately improve water management and water quality/quantity overall.

Sweden

Central

Central authorities:

- preserve and ensure the sustainable development of Swedish lakes and waterways, prepare national guidance, enforce regulations,
- act as competent authorities under the WFD and Floods Directive,
- coordinate the five water authorities,
- issue regulations regarding the implementation of measures and coordination of WFD measures,
- implement certain WFD measures and coordinate implementation of others,
- finance and carry out monitoring and financing of monitoring,
- coordinate the production of regional FRMPs.
- cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Regional

Sweden is divided into five water districts, which in turn cover 10 river basin districts (RBDs) reported under the WFD. One county administrative board in each water district is appointed as the authority for the water district. Counties and municipalities can belong to more than one water district.

The Water Authorities:

- prepare the RBMP and the programme of measures,
- monitor groundwater and surface water,

- coordinate implementation,
- coordinate public participation,
- set environmental quality standards.

All county Administrative Boards:

- enforce regulations,
- assess ground and surface water (including several monitoring programmes),
- conduct analysis on pressures and impacts,
- coordinates with other CABs,
- prepare the FRMPs (at APSFR level),
- coordinate public participation.

Local

Local authorities:

- provide water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment, either directly or via municipally owned water companies,
- take responsibility for permits and enforcement relating to the WFD,
- support public participation,
- coordinate with regional representatives on water coordination policy,

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- Havs- och vattenmyndigheten ([Swedish Agency for Marine and Water Management, SwAM](#))
- Environmental Protection Agency ([Naturvårdsverket](#))
- Geological Survey of Sweden ([Sveriges Geologiska Undersökning](#))
- Myndigheten för Samhällsskydd och Beredskap ([Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency](#))

Regional

- County boards (regionstyrelser), five of which are [Water District Authority](#) for a RBD.

Local

- Local municipalities (kommuner) and stakeholder Water Councils

Sources

- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan for Sweden](#)
- [Assessment of the Second River Basin Management Plan for Sweden](#)
- [Vattenmyndigheterna](#) – Website of the water authorities, summary of work in English
- [Vattenorganisationernas roll](#)
- [The MSB's work related to natural disasters](#)
- [SGU and the EC's Water Framework Directive](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

RBMPs are prepared at regional level, which means the recommendations will likely impact at least those RBDs which have been identified as needing improvement. The impact on the water authorities will depend on the number and severity of the recommendations pertaining to their RBMP, and whether the issue is a matter of reporting data/procedures already in place or whether new systems and methodologies are needed. In addition, a number of the recommendations concern increased/improved monitoring. This may have some impact on the water authorities, although it is noted that monitoring and the cost of monitoring is predominantly a national competency.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The FRMPs are prepared at regional level, which means the recommendations will likely impact at least those CABs which have been identified as needing improvement. The impact will depend on the number and severity of the recommendations pertaining to their RBMP, and whether the issue is a matter of reporting data/procedures already in place or whether new systems and methodologies are needed.

Recommendation: “Sweden should reinforce coordination between its FRMPs and RBMPs.”

Assessment: This may warrant increased collaboration between national-level competent authorities and the Water Authorities and the CABs, as well as between CABs preparing RBMPs and those preparing FRMPs. While this may result in

more effort on the part of regional authorities, it is an opportunity to exchange good practices, utilise economies of scale, and produce more coherent management plans.

Recommendation: “How potential impacts of climate change were considered should be reflected stronger in the second cycle, including systematic coordination with national climate change adaptation strategies.”

Assessment: Existing work on climate adaptation and resilience done by municipalities and regions should be leveraged to ensure that existing work is reflected and that national plans are implemented at all governance levels.

United Kingdom

Central

The central government is in charge of UK water legislation and policy, in close cooperation with regional governments

Regional

England

Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is responsible for:

- approving the RBMPs.

The Environment Agency is responsible for:

- preparation of RBMPs and FRMPs,
- monitoring of water bodies and identification and monitoring of protected areas under the WFD,
- implementation of the WFD,
- coordination of public participation.

Wales

National Assembly for Wales is responsible for:

- approving RBMPs and FRMPs.

The Welsh Government is responsible for:

- supporting NRW on the practical implementation of the WFD,
- carrying out economic analysis required by the WFD,
- developing a national FRMP.

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) is responsible for:

- producing and updating RBMPs and FRMPs at river basin level,
- monitoring of waters and identification and monitoring of protected areas under the WFD,
- implementation of the WFD,
- coordination of public participation.

Scotland

Scottish Environmental Protection Agency (SEPA) is responsible for:

- coordinating all administrative bodies and reports to the Commission,
- developing the RBMP,
- monitoring the implementation of the RBMP.

Scottish Water is responsible for:

- assessing the risk of flood from surface water and combined sewers,
- providing technical support to the local authorities for the preparation of FRMP,
- providing drinking water supply, sewerage and waste water treatment services.

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Environmental Agency (NIEA) within the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs is responsible for:

- the implementation of the WFD and the FD,
- preparing the RBMPs and the FRMPs,
- monitoring and enforcing compliance,
- monitoring quality and quantity of ground water,
- ensuring public participation through WFD Stakeholder Fora,
- coordinating with the Republic of Ireland on the two International River Basins.

Northern Ireland Water, a government-owned company, is responsible for:

- provision of water and sewerage in Northern Ireland.

Gibraltar

The Department of Environment and Climate Change of the Government of Gibraltar is responsible for:

- compliance with all the provisions of the WFD and the FD.

The Environmental Agency of Gibraltar is responsible for environmental monitoring.

Local

England

- Counties (acting as Lead Local Flood Authorities) produce local flood risk management strategies,
- District and Borough Councils carry out flood risk management works on minor watercourses.

Wales

- County Councils (acting as Lead Local Flood Authorities) produce local FRMPs.

Scotland

- Local Plan Districts are responsible for:
 - Preparing FRMPs and Flood Risk Management Strategies,
 - Ensuring public participation,
 - Enforcing the RBMP.

Northern Ireland

- Local authorities give input to the River Basin District Advisory Councils in the RBMP and FRMP drafting process.

Local authorities across the UK provided input the preparation of RBMPs, FRMPs and local plans, including via Local Advisory Groups.

Responsible ministries/bodies

Central

- [Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs](#)

Regional

- [Environment Agency](#)
- [Natural Resources Wales](#) and [Welsh Government](#)
- [SEPA](#) and [Scottish Water](#)
- The [Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs](#), [Department of Infrastructure of Northern Ireland](#) and [Northern Ireland Water](#)
- [Department of Environment and Climate Change of the Government of Gibraltar and Environmental Agency](#)

Local

- England: Greater London Borough, Counties, District and Borough Councils
- Wales: County Councils
- Scotland: Local Councils
- Northern Ireland: District Councils

Sources

- [Assessment of the second River Basin Management Plan of the United Kingdom](#)
- [Assessment of the first Flood Risk Management Plan of the United Kingdom](#)
- [United Kingdom: Voluntary National Review of progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals](#)
- [The Water Environment \(Water Framework Directive\) \(England and Wales\) Regulations 2017](#)
- [The Water Environment \(Controlled Activities\) \(Scotland\) Regulations 2011](#)
- [The Water Environment \(Water Framework Directive\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2003](#)

- [Gibraltar River Basin Management Plan 2015 – 2021](#)
- [Flood and Water Management Act 2010](#)
- [Flood Risk Management \(Scotland\) Act 2009](#)
- [Water Environment \(Floods Directive\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2009](#)
- [Environment \(Assessment And Management Of Flood Risks\) Regulations 2010](#)
- [Local Government Association](#)
- [EurEau, The governance of water services in Europe](#)

Recommendations in the WFD implementation report

The regions are the competent authorities for the development of RBMPs, so most recommendations, including technical ones, are addressed to regional authorities. Those recommendations include addressing uncertainties in the assessment of the status of the waters, refinement and review of the criteria for the application of exemptions and clarification of the measures used for achieving the WFD objectives.

Recommendation: “The United Kingdom needs to ensure that, in the preparation of the next RBMPs, the public is duly consulted taking into account these documents purpose and complexity”

Assessment: The LRAs are in an ideal position to engage the public in the preparation of the RBMP, since they are responsible for their development and for public participation. The designation of more simplified communication documents could assist to a wider participation.

Recommendations in the Floods implementation report

The regions are the competent authorities for the FRMPs in England, Northern Ireland and Wales, so recommendations, including technical ones, are addressed to the regions. In Scotland, Local Plan Districts, bringing together local authorities, are competent authorities. The recommendations include the development of measurable FRMPs, improvement of the methodologies in terms of costs and benefits and an inclusion of the costs of measures and potential funding for its implementation.

EN

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**European Committee
of the Regions**

Created in 1994 following the signing of the Maastricht Treaty,
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local representatives from all 27 Member States, representing over 447 million Europeans.

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