

Implementing the Public Participation Concept into Water Management in the Czech Republic – Critical Analysis

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Abstract:

The public participation principle is currently an accented element of the EU environmental policy. It is believed that by involving local stakeholders into decision-making, environmental resources will be managed more successfully. The Water Framework Directive introduces the public participation principle into the water management of all member states. The purpose of the paper is to evaluate the implementation of this principle in the Czech Republic as a new member state and also a post-socialist country with no previous experience of such a practice in water policy. The evaluation is based mainly on qualitative criteria proposed by former studies.

Keywords: public participation – water management - Water Framework Directive – Czech Republic

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In the Czech Republic, water management (i.e. decision-making about the water use and water protection) has always been heavily centralized. This follows from the historical political background (i.e. the management of natural resources during the communist period), but also from the general belief that water is a strategic commodity and as such it must be managed according to government priorities [Matula, 1998].

A change in approach came with the EU Water Framework directive (No. 2000/60/EC) at the beginning of the 21st century. This directive demands the factual decentralization of water management throughout Europe according to hydrological rather than administrative borders, following the requirement of a better spatial fit between institutions and the ecosystem

[Young, 2002; Moss, 2008]. Goals (water quality indicators) are given centrally by the European Commission, but tools for meeting this so-called “good water status” should be set by the river basin authorities of particular hydrological units, regardless of the political priorities of national states – i.e. fully respecting the ecosystem approach [Chave, 2001]. In addition to this, the public (especially local key stakeholders) should actively participate in the assembling of river basin management plans. Public hearings, seminars, round tables, consultations and other necessary forms of participation are supposed to be an integral part of the new water planning process. The hope behind this requirement is that agreed measures to reach a good water status will be undertaken without open conflicts and delays and the water policy will become more transparent and open for local user opinions [Muro, 2006].

The main Water Framework Directive ideas (decentralization/depolitization of water management and public participation) are currently implemented into Czech legislation and practice. First management plans are being developed and will come into force in 2009. It is becoming clear that Czech water bodies are mostly heavily modified regarding their morphology and pollution, so a lot of work needs to be done to reach EU good water status criteria by 2015 [Povodí Moravy, 2006]. A large number of renaturalizations of small streams and other environmentally oriented measures are expected to be included into water management plans. This also requires a significant shift in the philosophy of the Czech water policy (from a rather technocratic to an ecosystem approach) which causes nationwide controversies and disagreements. Besides this the “new” river basin authorities (which were transformed from previous water managers – state enterprises) have problems in understanding the purpose of public participation in water management and the process itself has been poorly organized, so far [IREAS, 2008]. There is a great danger that public participation in the Czech Republic will not achieve the expected positive outcomes mentioned above.

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the public participation process in the Czech Republic in 2003 – 2007 by using partly developed qualitative evaluation criteria [WWF, 2001 and Muro, 2006]. Our hypothesis is that due to the improper legal background and no history of public participation in Czech water management, there is a great potential for the failure of the principle. Data to validate or confute this hypothesis were gathered by direct attendance at public hearings in selected Czech river basin districts and 45 interviews undertaken with key stakeholders and representatives of river basin authorities

First, we will briefly introduce the theoretical background of the public participation principle in environmental policy. Further, we would like to show how this principle was implemented into the Czech legal environment (i.e. what is the legal support for public participation in water management) and how it was practically applied at a river basin district level shortly before the final version of management plans had been introduced to the public. The main goal is to stress the problems and controversies in understanding the public participation

principle that may appear in the post-socialist countries with a brief history of democratic institutions.

Participation of the public as one level of multilevel environmental governance

Over the last two decades, there has been an increasing belief among scientists dealing with environmental problems that “local governance systems are crucial to the successful implementation of sustainable management practices” [Short and Winter, 1999: 613; see also Ostrom, 2006; Young, 2002 and others]. By governance systems we usually mean different kinds of overlapping institutions varying from formal to informal, from local to international, etc. As pointed out by J. Paavola (2005), **governance** may be what governments do, but in some cases it does not necessary involve the state level [Paavola and Adger, 2005]. Following from this, **environmental governance** is widely defined “as the establishment, reaffirmation or change of institutions to resolve conflicts over environmental resources (Adger, et al., 2003; Bromley, 1989, 1991; Young, 1994a,b:15; see also Knight, 1992)” [Paavola, 2007]. **1** If there are multiple authorities with overlapping jurisdictions, we speak about **multilevel environmental governance**. As emphasized by Andersson and Ostrom (2006), there is increasing empirical evidence, that multilevel governance structures achieve better outcomes (regarding sustainable use of natural resources) than highly centralized systems [Andersson and Ostrom, 2006]. Within this paper, the participation of the general public and the active involvement of key stakeholders is understood to be an integral part of the local level of environmental governance.

Throughout Europe, the allocation of environmental resources and water especially has been mostly centrally driven, to date. National priorities such as flood protection, water accumulation or irrigation and the optimization of water pollution in the past often overcame the sustainable management of ecosystems (river basins) as a whole. Cross border problems have been shifted to countries situated downstream [Čamrová, Jílková, 2006]. The local stakeholders have had limited access to information and practically negligible influence or power regarding the public good – water. This description is particularly valid for the post-socialist countries (currently new Member States of the EU). Beginning in the late 70s, the European Commonwealth started to develop an international level of the water policy focused on common pollution standards and drinking water criteria [Lanz and Scheuer, 2000]. Supported by the current socio-environmental research results mentioned above, the new WFD pushes the governance stratification even further. Among other requirements, it introduces the local or regional level of water governance and emphasizes the stronger position of the public [WFD, 2000]. **2** Further, the governance structures should be



harmonized in all Member States, decreasing the position of the national level in favor of both the international (European) and local level.

According to the WFD public participation is understood to be [WFD, 2000]:

- a) the participation of the general public,
- b) the active involvement of the key stakeholders within each river basin district.

These two areas closely relate to each other, but, for the purpose of the proper performance of the participation principle, it is necessary to distinguish them. Primarily the general public must be continuously informed about the planning process and formal consultations of three documents (the timesheet, interim overview of the significant water management issues and the draft version of the river basin management plan) must take place. Moreover, active involvement gives stronger participation rights to selected stakeholders. According to WFD guidelines, it implies that “stakeholders are invited to contribute actively to the planning process by discussing issues and contributing to their solution” [Guidance Document No. 8, 2003: 11]. The crucial point is that stakeholder involvement goes far beyond the participation of the general public, although it does not automatically give them decision-making power. The exact performance of active involvement (i.e. who will be involved and how) is not specified at the EU level. It should be determined by the national legislation or by the strategy of the river basin district authorities, which are responsible for setting up new river basin management plans.

According to M. Muro (2006), there are strong arguments why the process of public participation should not be underestimated (in other words why the local level of water governance should be activated as strongly as possible) [Muro, 2006]:

- the public is lacking information or it is improperly informed about environmental management,
- the public’s values and preferences are not adequately taken into account by decision-makers,
- innovative solutions are rarely employed,
- there is a lack of trust and therefore also a lack of willingness to accept the measures imposed by decision-makers upon the public.

Most of all, the requirement of public participation addresses the question of water management transparency. It also reflects the fact that planning and decision-making is not only a scientific or expert process, but primarily a political process [Muro, 2006]. It is believed that these deficits could be removed through the suggested participation process.

Legal support for public participation in water management in the Czech Republic

As already mentioned, meeting the expected goals of the WDF (physical but also social) will be quite challenging. In Czech water management, public participation or generally involvement at the local level in decision-making is practically a new issue. This is a different situation from some “old” EU members such as France, Great Britain or the Netherlands, where the public has already spoken up within advisory councils, sounding boards or water committees [Muro, 2006]. Contrarily, in the Czech Republic (even after the fall of Communism in 1989) water management has been driven mainly from the national level. It means that water and water bodies are declared to be public property and managed by the state’s water managers. Since the national government finances most investments according to the priorities of water managers, there has been very limited space for the involvement of local governments or the public [Čamrová, Jílková, 2006]. ³

The public participation principle was implemented by the Water Act (No. 254/2001 Coll.) and the subsequent decree (No. 142/2005). In accordance with Article 14 of the WFD, where it is stated which documents must be commented on by the general public and how. In the Czech legislation, the difference between the roles of the general public and key stakeholders is not emphasized. Therefore, the formalized public participation only contains the provision of information to the public **and acceptance consultations which must be dealt with officially.**

Higher levels of participation (involvement, cooperation etc.) are recommended in the guidelines issued by Czech ministries, but they are not obligatory for the river basin authorities. Guidelines specify who should be addressed as a key stakeholder and how he or she may participate (e.g. by delivering local knowledge within an advisory group, attending the roundtables or by direct involvement in a river basin planning commission) [Ministry of Agriculture, 2003]. River basin authorities in cooperation with regional governments must also work out the public participation strategy [Ministry of Agriculture, 2005]. Consequently, these strategies stress the active involvement of key stakeholders above the participation of the general public – e.g. in the Morava and Dyje river basin districts, the river basin authority maps groups of stakeholders (water users, mayors, NGOs, etc.) and calls them up to fulfill single planning steps, such as to collate the main water management problems or to assemble a list of potential revitalization measures. As also highlighted in strategies, the selected representative of the public has no decision-making power and does not become a member of the river basin planning commission [Povodí Moravy, 2008].

Evaluation of the process of public participation

From the background information provided it is clear that there is almost no formalized pressure on the active involvement of key stakeholders in the Czech Republic. The legislation contains only the minimum of the obligatory requirements regarding public participation in general which must also be reported by Member States to Brussels. A large space is left open for the voluntary action of river basin authorities, although the importance of the whole process is clearly articulated. In combination with the lack of any tradition in the public participation of water management, this creates a potential for failure. The goal of our field research was to verify to what extent the participation principle is truly implemented in practice.

Method

To evaluate the public participation process, the construction of quantitative and qualitative indicators is necessary. We are convinced that participation itself is mainly a qualitative process that is why numerical assessment will play a minor role in the following evaluation. This approach is supported by several studies [Muro, 2006; Videira et al., 2006] which aim to develop a common evaluation structure for the public participation processes in water management. Our analysis supplements their effort and tests some already suggested criteria in the case of the Czech Republic. The common methodology for these types of evaluations has not been set yet and will be further investigated as the first round of water planning is over in 2009.

For the purpose of the evaluation, data from three (of eight) Czech river basin districts were gathered and about 45 interviews with planners and key stakeholders were undertaken between June – November 2007. The researchers also carefully monitored the public participation processes in all three river basin districts – i.e. they personally attended organized public hearings and seminars, they reviewed consultations sent to river basin authorities by the public to comment on a list of main water management problems. The evaluation covers the period of 2003 – 2007. Based on interviews and personal experience researchers were able to evaluate the whole process considering the following criteria [WWF, 2001 and Muro, 2006]:

- a) PUNCTUALITY: Is the public involved in time (in the stage when options are still open)?
- b) OPENNESS: Is information provided to everyone, willingly and understandably (in a common language)?
- c) TRANSPARENCY: Is it clearly defined as to what issues are (not) the subject of consultancy as well as who will be involved and how? Is the effect of participation on the final decision specified?
- d) : Is the public regularly called upon to participate by planners/decision-makers?

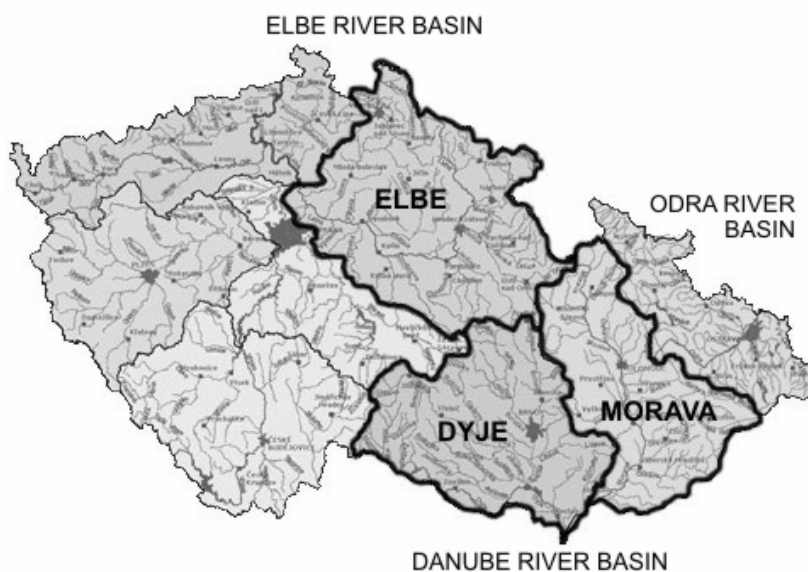
- e) **INCLUSIVITY**: Are all relevant interests represented?
- f) **CONTINUITY**: Is the participation long-term and continuous? Does it help to develop trust between decision-makers and the public?
- g) **SUPPORT**: Is there special support provided to interest groups that have a lack of capacity to participate?

The criteria will be applied in the qualitative part of the analysis separately on the participation of the general public and the active involvement of key stakeholders with a stronger focus on the latter. We are aware of the fact that the planning process has not been entirely finished, yet. The evaluation does not cover the period of 2008 and 2009 when draft versions of river basin management plans will be consulted by the public and the final version of plans will be approved by decision-makers. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the knowledge from 2003 (when the implementation process started at the river basin level) to 2007 gives us adequate support for our conclusions.

Quantitative results

The river basin districts in our focus are: the Morava, Dyje and Elbe river basin. Each river basin has more than a million inhabitants (from 1.4 to 1.7 mill.) and contains about 700 – 1 400 municipalities of varying sizes. Municipalities above 2 000 inhabitants comprised about 7 – 15 %, municipalities above 10 000 inhabitants only 1 – 3 % from the total number of municipalities. The area of the river basin districts varies from 9 400 to 14 700 km², where the Elbe river basin is the largest.

Map 1: Selected river basin districts in the Czech Republic



Although each river basin district has great autonomy in organizing the involvement of stakeholders, procedures are often transferred between river basin districts. We stress differences among them wherever necessary. For the quantitative evaluation we have chosen the number of comments sent by the public to the timetable and the interim overview of the significant water management issues, the number of seminars, the heterogeneity of the planning committee members and the number of working groups which support the work of the committee. Results are presented in the following table.

Table 1: Quantitative criteria of the public participation process (evaluation of the period 2003 – 2007)

	Morava	Dyje	Elbe
No. of written comments received – Timetable (2006)	4	5	-
No. of written comments received – Interim Overview of Significant Water Management Issues (2007)	12	18	52
No. of seminars	13	15	17
No. of working groups	2	2	6
Heterogeneity of the planning committee/working groups (8 points maximum*)	1 / 2	1 / 2	1 / 2

* One point is given for the representation of each of the following stakeholder groups [see Guidance Document No. 8, 2003 for justification]: a) government expert agencies, b) academic institutions, c) expert/professional groups of entrepreneurs, d) municipal representatives, e) interest NGOs (e.g. environmental), f) locally oriented NGOs, g) key land owners or agriculturists, h) key water users/withdrawals.

Source: authors

The stated numbers require further comments. First two indicators refer to the participation of the **general public**. Whoever wanted was welcome to send written comments related to documents which were posted up for a given period. The comments were mainly sent by municipal representatives and environmental NGOs. River basin authorities evaluated the participation as very low (considering the total number of inhabitants). On the other hand, in the case of the timetable, it was difficult to raise a purposeful comment. In the case of water management issues, some comments referred to local issues which could have been considered as significant at the river basin district scale. Some stressed the importance of water quality improvement (eutrophication problems) or the need for the renaturalisation of water channels.

Most of the seminars were held between 2005 – 2007, which indicates about 3 – 4 meetings per year. However, it is crucial to analyze how and for whom the seminars were organized. The majority of seminars was represented by meetings at the regional offices (each river basin district touches an area of at least 5 regions) which were open to the “expert public”. The water management issues were discussed there and mostly municipal representatives attended. A few seminars (2 – 4) were organized specifically to inform the mayors of municipalities or drinking water producers as the largest withdrawers of water in river basins. For 1 – 2 specific meetings the local and environmental NGOs were invited. In the Dyje and Morava river basin districts, NGOs also organized two seminars by themselves to learn more about the planning process and their involvement options. One seminar at each river basin district was held by our expert team. All key stakeholders including water planners were invited, although not all of them participated. From this description we can conclude, that the seminars for the public and/or stakeholders are fragmented. They do not have the form of roundtables where regular participants would repeatedly clarify their positions. More likely, they are organized in the form of a (sometimes publicly accessible) set of presentations made by the river basin authorities and followed by open discussions. A moderator or intermediary is missing. Representatives of stakeholder groups are invited to separate meetings. We will come back to this point in the qualitative section.

Another option for stakeholder involvement is via working groups or planning committees. The planning committee is a joint body of the river basin administrator and representatives of the regional offices and it is responsible for the proper preparation of planning documents in a particular river basin district. It may create different working groups when necessary. As evident from table 1, there is a very low interest of planners to involve stakeholders into the committee. Only expert agencies of the state are present (e.g. the Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Inspection, etc.). A committee has about 15 – 20 members and the main argument for the exclusion of other members is to keep it manageable. In the Dyje and Morava river basin districts, 2 temporal working groups were established (for the purpose of the renaturalization measure list and the significant water management issue list). Drinking water producers were invited to participate in the latter. In the Elbe river basin district, there are 6 permanent working groups for particular sub-basins. One representative of environmental NGOs is a member of the each working group.

Qualitative results

In the previous chapter, we summed up a few of the indicators that can be expressed by exact numbers. This data provided a brief overview about the frequency of particular activities. It is clear that public participation via sending comments is very low and also that the involvement of key stakeholders lacks continuity. We investigated the quality of these processes further by applying the qualitative criteria listed in the methodological part. The results, based on

interviews and personal involvement, are summarized in the enclosed table. They are the same for all three monitored river basin districts.

Table 2: Qualitative criteria of the public participation process (evaluation of the period 2003 – 2007)

Criteria	General public	Key stakeholders
PUNCTUALITY	●●	●
OPENNESS	●●	●●
TRANSPARENCY	●●●	●
ACTIVITY	●●●	●
INCLUSIVITY	●●●	○
CONTINUITY	○	○
SUPPORT	○	○

Legend: ●●● ... criteria fulfilled, ●● ... criteria fulfilled with objections, ● ... criteria partly fulfilled, ○ ... criteria not met

Source: authors

At first sight it is obvious that the participation of the general public is performed better than the active involvement of key stakeholders. This is mainly due to the legal requirements for the former which have to be met. We will comment on the evaluation results one by one.

The first criteria (**PUNCTUALITY**) deals with the time dimension – i.e. potential participants should be involved when the options for solving the problems are still open, so that participants can really change something. This is mostly true for the general public that is informed and gave comments, the only problem is that the number of participants is very low. Some key stakeholders (some municipal representatives, drinking water companies, some NGOs) have already been involved in consulting on significant problems or via working groups. However, the level of involvement differs significantly among particular groups and there are still important stakeholders which have not been activated yet (especially farmers and other land holders, fishermen, industrial water users or business groups and, to a large extent, also local and environmental NGOs).

Regarding **OPENNESS**, information is provided to everyone via the internet. Leaflets, brochures, posters, etc. are published and distributed. The river basin authorities are also willing to consult the issues via phone or personally. The big problem is the structure of the information published. As pointed out by stakeholders, many documents are not written in a common language, they contain legal formulas and hydrological expressions and some of

them are quite long. Therefore, the goals of the planning (the vision) are not clear and it is time demanding to find out what should be the real impact of the public or stakeholders.

The **TRANSPARENCY** criteria directly involves the level of the information structure. In particular, for key stakeholders it is not clear what their effect on the final decisions is and also what kind of decisions will be done at the river basin district scale. Good example of this is the situation of some mayors who are afraid of future dam constructions on the territories of their municipalities. The priority of future dam construction was introduced by the national government, but surprisingly it is not an issue of river basin management plans. So the mayors raise objections against dams at the local level and they are repeatedly refused as unjustified. The means of involvement differs significantly among groups of stakeholders (some of them are part of working groups, some of them are invited for a discussion seminar, etc.). A certain fecklessness as to who, how and what to organize is apparent from the example of environmental NGOs who are quite active and also very critical of river basin authorities. In the Dyje and Morava river basin districts in 2005, NGOs were called up in writing to express their will to be involved in planning. Some of them did, but then they were not involved into any planning structures. Only a seminar for NGOs was organized in 2007. In the Elbe river basin district, NGOs expressed their disappointment with not being included at all, so in 2007 one representative of NGOs finally became a member of each working group. The river basin authorities are afraid of extreme opinions which could slow down or block the planning process, so they compromise between encouraging the involvement of key stakeholders and the limitation of the role of selected groups (we will come back to this point later).

The criteria of **ACTIVITY** and **INCLUSIVITY** are well met for the participation of the general public. As mentioned, this is because both the frequency of calling up the public and the specification of the general public, are well described in the directive as well as the Czech legislation. However, only some groups of key stakeholders are regularly called to participate (e.g. municipal representatives and state agencies). Some of them (e.g. drinking water producers, NGOs) are called up sporadically and the rest of them are ignored or ignore appeals. As a result, not all of the relevant interests are included in water planning. Why should this be considered a problem? We already pointed out that public participation in general should ensure the elimination of conflicts. In all the monitored river basin districts farmers and fishermen (owners or managers of ponds for fish production) were a neglected group of stakeholders. To reach a good water status of water bodies, the close cooperation of all the relevant actors at the river basin scale will be necessary in the future – in particular, farmers will have to change management practices alongside rivers and fishermen will have to treat water quality (especially nutrient concentrations) more carefully. Due to the need for renaturalizing smaller streams it will be necessary to buy agricultural land or to limit ownership rights on it. All these measures will affect the production practices of these

stakeholders. If they will be united and unwilling to cooperate, strong conflicts will appear sooner or later.

As is obvious from the participation process described, the criteria of **CONTINUITY** shows very poor performance. The participation process is fragmented and in reality it only started at the end of 2005 when the first deadline for the participation of the general public got closer. However, the key problem is that involvement at the local level, as organized now, does not help to develop trust between planners and the public. Due to the mentioned change in philosophy within the Czech water management, there are still strong tensions between representatives of the technocratic (engineering) approach and the ecosystem approach, where the river basin authorities represent the former and NGOs, the State Environmental Agency and some municipal representatives the latter. Therefore, some active groups of stakeholders are highly suspicious about the new planning process and its result. In particular environmental NGOs cannot imagine how engineers employed by the river basin authority will switch from hard technical measures to soft measures (because parallel to new water planning process some hard measures are still built). At the Morava and Dyje river basin districts, the environmental NGOs have a strong position – they have the capacities to develop alternative studies and suggest competitive solutions to flood protection problems. They strongly welcome the ideas brought by the WFD, but they are afraid of its pro-forma fulfillment in the Czech Republic. Evidence of the problematic procedure for them is the selective organization of key stakeholder involvement.

Finally, special **SUPPORT** is not provided to groups which lack the capacity to participate. These are specifically all non-state actors that could participate only in their free time. River basin authorities do not see support for weak participators as a part of their agenda.

Reasons for the poor performance

Gathering quantitative and qualitative results together we can conclude that there are serious problems regarding the public participation process in the water management of the Czech Republic. In particular the stakeholder involvement was evaluated as seriously underestimated. In spite of the fact that there is still one year left, we can confirm our hypothesis about the failure of the performance of the participation principle. The three main reasons for this conclusion are:

- The participation process (e.g. information campaigns, organization of seminars, identification of key stakeholders) started quite late compared to available data from abroad. That is why the number of participants is very low and the understanding of the purpose of the whole process is poor.

- The involvement of key stakeholders is not organized to reconcile conflicting interests, but rather as a selective advisory process, where some groups willing to participate are excluded and other necessary groups do not attend.
- The planners (river basin authorities) did not manage to gain a good image during the participation process, so there is a lack of trust regarding their intentions.

What are the reasons for such a severe failure? Based on the interviews with planners, stakeholders and case studies from abroad, we came to the following conclusions. First, there is a question of know-how. River basin authorities in general lack experience in active communication with the public. They are primarily engineers, not managers or sociologists. They (according to their words) also lack the personnel and financial capacities to organize the whole participation process, since there are many other challenging goals of the WFD (new types of monitoring, applying water status criteria, economic analysis, etc.). They do not seek out examples of good practice, they decided not to use facilitators or intermediaries. Above all they believe they do quite a good job.

Second, there are communication failures. At the end of 2007, key stakeholders did not know much about the possible future changes towards higher water quality, therefore it was difficult for them to find out how their interests would be affected in the future. River basin authorities on the one hand gathered comments on the timetable, but on the other hand were unable to send a clear message to e.g. farmers and fishermen. This means that the obligatory (legal) requirements on public participation are fulfilled without objections, but the qualitative dimension of the process is ignored.

Third, coming back to the continuity issue, in the end the public (including stakeholders) do not believe that their participation can really change something. This observation is crucial and touches the very essence of the new water management according to the WFD. Mutually, if there is lack of trust and understanding of the purpose of the whole process, public participation will never be properly undertaken. In other words this means that the potential of the participation principle will not be realized.

Conclusions

Our research aims to complement a few public participation evaluation studies related to water management reform according to the WFD. This kind of analysis slowly develops its own methodological background and will be regularly applied after 2009 when the first round of the water planning is over. As pointed out the directive introduces the public participation principle into the new institutional structure of water management in all EU Member States. The general public and key stakeholders should be informed, able to comment and actively involved in the creation of river basin management plans for the purpose of the future

consensual water policy imbedded at the local (river basin level). Our evaluation was done in the Czech Republic, a post-socialist country, and covered the years 2003 – 2007. Three of eight river basin districts were monitored.

Based on selected quantitative and qualitative criteria, the performance of the public participation was evaluated as rather poor especially lacking the continuity and support of the disadvantaged groups of stakeholders. The participation of the general public showed better performance than the so-called active involvement of key stakeholders. This is mostly because of the legally anchored requirements of the former which are included both in the WFD and Czech legislation. On the other hand, stakeholder involvement is purely a qualitative process and its fulfillment is strongly dependent on the understanding, capacity and the will of regulators or planners. Due to the historical evolution, the Czech river basin authorities lack all three features for proper stakeholder involvement.

Notes:

- 1.** Some authors strictly distinguish between terms “management” and “governance”. According to Short and Winter (1999), *management* “refers to physical and economic management activities and the day-to-day decision-making ... *Governance* refers to the decision-making structures, mechanisms and systems of administration which influence the operation of *management* systems” [Short and Winter, 1999: 614]. In our paper, we do not use such a strict distinction. Both terms should be understood rather as synonyms.
- 2.** This requirement also corresponds with the evolution in the environmental policy in general – see e.g. the goals of the Aarhus Convention or other European directives on EIA (97/11/EC), SEA (2001/42/EC) or IPPC (96/61/EC) [Videira et al., 2006].
- 3.** Currently, the situation is slowly changing because of three reasons: 1) the new EU legislation introduces the multilevel governance principle, 2) the problems regarding water ecosystems must be solved outside the water channels (at the river basin scale) where property relationships are complex, 3) the environmental NGOs step up the pressure against technically oriented measures (dam constructions, river regulations, etc.) – due to Natura 2000 sites they can get through to Brussels when necessary. In the next text we will address the legislative changes related to the first point.

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