

03. WATER QUALITY

POLICY & LEGISLATIVE DEVELOPMENTS

At the end of 2016 two documents relevant for water management were adopted:

- The Strategy on Water Management in the Republic of Serbia until 2034, and
- Changes and Amendments to the Law on Waters (Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia, no 101/2016).

Both documents were developed in alignment with the EU Water Framework Directive and EU Floods Directive. However, at present the environmental and nature conservation elements of the legislative framework for water management remain insufficiently connected and integrated. Primarily this relates to harmonization with the EU Habitats Directive and Birds Directive. Public consultations on both documents were organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection¹⁸; however, the scale of the consultations was limited, meeting only the minimal legal requirements (a public discussion on the final draft and the period for written comments). Such complex documents, with such a large number of stakeholders, require a more structured consultation processes, beginning at the outset of the process of drafting the document.

A Water Management plan for the Danube Basin was developed prior to the period covered by this report. The public consultation for the plan was concluded in 2015; however, the plan has still not been adopted. According to information provided by the Directorate for Waters, the plan was withdrawn because it was not properly harmonized with the new amendments to the Law on Waters¹⁹.

In 2017, the then Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection began development of the Directive on Specific Implementation Plans (DSIP), which covers the EU Water Framework Directive, Nitrates Directive, Urban Waste Waters Treatment Directive and Drinking Water Directive. From the outset, the development of the DSIP has been participatory, including civil sector participation in the working groups developing the directive. The Ministry has also established a working group to develop parts of the water management plans, in which the civil sector has also been involved. The working group was recently established and at the time of writing no meetings have yet taken place.

In June 2017, the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection divided into two ministries: the Ministry for Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management. Responsibility for water related issues are now shared

¹⁸ At the time of the consultation the Ministry responsible for water management was the Ministry of Agriculture and Environmental Protection, which in June 2017 was divided into two ministries: the Ministry for Environmental Protection and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management.

¹⁹ A request for access to information of public importance about this situation was sent to the Republic Directorate for Water at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management on June 23, 2017, by CEKOR (a member of the Coalition 27). The request is filed under number 011-00-33 / 12 / 2017-07.

between the two new ministries, which can be expected to cause difficulties in the application of regulations related to water quality and protection in the future.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are still many challenges to the implementation of plans and regulations in the water management sector. There were no significant advancements in the development of the capacity of responsible institutions and organizations in the sector. Among the most problematic issues are the control and prevention of water pollution, control of extraction of river sediments, control of the use of ground waters and control and prevention of illegal construction within water zones.

Given numerous interests overlap the water sector, the lack of structured inter-sectoral cooperation remains the main challenge. Enhancing cooperation with the energy, spatial planning, environment and agricultural sectors is vital. Better cooperation with the environmental sector is particularly important in order to effectively integrate EU nature directives (Habitat and Bird Directives) into water management practice.