



L E A R N

GEF IW:LEARN

METHODOLOGICAL  
APPROACH FOR THE  
ESTABLISHMENT AND  
SUSTAINING OF A  
REGIONAL DIALOGUE  
AND COMMUNITY  
OF PRACTICE ON  
TRANSBOUNDARY  
WATER RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT



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# Abbreviations

CoP	Community of Practice	IW	International Waters
GEF	Global Environment Facility	IWRM	Integrated Water Resources Management
GEF IW:LEARN	Global Environment Facility International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resource Network	MA	Methodological Approach
GWP	Global Water Partnership	MENA	Middle East and North Africa region
GWP CACENA	GWP Regional Water Partnership Network for the Countries of Caucasus and Central Asia	RCC	Regional Cooperation Council
GWP-Med	Regional Water Partnership of the inter-governmental organisation Global Water Partnership for the Mediterranean Region	SEE	South East Europe
ICWE	International Conference on Water and Environment	TWRM	Transboundary Water Resources Management
		UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
		UNRCCA	United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
		WFD	EU Water Framework Directive



# Executive Summary

This document describes a Methodological Approach (MA), gives a theoretical background and experiences from South-East Europe (SEE) and other regions on the establishment and sustaining a Regional Dialogue and Community of Practice (CoP). The Regional Dialogue and CoP are seen in the document as frameworks for establishing informal and formal transboundary water cooperation on the regional and basin levels.

In Section 1 the modern concept of IWRM, Integrated Water Resources Management is explained with the basin and various management approaches and the importance of stakeholder importance.

In Section 2 various aspects of Transboundary Water Resources Management is described and explained. Concepts such as basin vs administrative borders, power dynamics between countries and water management paradigms are explained. Benefit sharing as a driver for TWRM is highlighted. Various narratives on transboundary cooperation with consequences for country relations are reviewed as are available tools for water diplomacy and cooperation. The important aspect of international water law is further analysed in some detail.

Section 3 focuses on the theoretical background of applying Regional Dialogues and Communities of Practice to advance transboundary water cooperation and some aspects of how this could be done effectively. It is concluded that these approaches are important instrument helping to build trust and capacity and facilitate new relationships. The link between Regional Dialogues and the establishment of Communities of Practice is stressed, the former being an instrument, a platform to establish and energize the latter.

In Section 4 of the report the practical experiences from several regions is described with a focus on the process led by GWP-Med in South East Europe. Activities in specific basins – Basin Dialogues - are analysed and it is shown how Basin Dialogues can emerge from the Regional Dialogues/CoPs and how systematic multi-stakeholder consultation processes at the basin level may strengthen formal and informal cooperation. The development in SEE of cooperation in the Drin basin validates the hypothesis that the Regional Dialogue approach and establishment of a CoP may facilitate TWRM. It is concluded that the experience from ten years of conducting a successful process in SEE provides the basis for a replicable "Regional Dialogue" model.

Building on Sections 1-4, Section 5 proposes a step-by-step initiation and development of a Regional Dialogue, CoP and informal/formal basin dialogues. Section 6 provides practical means and tools to support the development of the regional Dialogue. The MA aims to guide the replication of the trust-and consensus-building regional dialogue model and to promote transboundary cooperation in various regions.

In two annexes some more details are given on the theoretical background as well as the practical experiences and developments in SEE.



# Preface

This document is the output of one of the activities of Global Environment Facility International Waters: Learning Exchange and Resource Network (GEF IW:LEARN) project<sup>1</sup>. It describes a Methodological Approach (MA) for the establishment and sustaining of a Regional Dialogue and Community of Practice on TWRM, and informal and formal cooperation on the basin level.

In addition to a theoretical analysis the background for the Methodological Approach is provided by the Regional Dialogue process and the establishment of a Community of Practice that was pioneered in South Eastern Europe (SEE) in 2005 until present time.

The purpose of this Methodological Approach (MA) document is to guide the establishment and sustaining of Regional Dialogues and Communities of Practice (CoPs) on TWRM based on theoretical considerations and the practical experience from work in South East Europe and some other regions. It is the aspiration that the application of the methodology will contribute to an increased cooperation on shared water resources.

The document aims to present process and experiences, linkages with the theory at hand and partners involved and to analyse if the experience from of conducting a successful process in SEE and other regions provides the basis for a replicable "Regional Dialogue" model.

The MA is produced for all stakeholders and practitioners on different levels involved in TWRM. It is intended to directly impact GEF IW:LEARN and its partners' ability to initiate regional dialogue processes in other regions. It will also be used in the GWP Network for planning and implementation of activities.

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<sup>1</sup> The corresponding project component is sub-component 2.3: "Supporting Regional Cooperation Over Shared Water Resources through Dialogue" and Activity 2.3.2: "A methodological approach (MA) for the establishment and sustaining of a Regional Dialogue on TWRM and a Community of Practice (CoP) at regional level" of the International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network.



# Key organizations involved

The GEF is the largest funding mechanism for multi-country collaboration on water and oceans. Countries participating in GEF International Waters (IW) projects have negotiated and agreed on numerous regional cooperation frameworks, treaties, or protocols.

The GEF IW fosters transboundary cooperation and builds trust between states and helps to jointly manage their transboundary surface water basins, groundwater basins, and coastal and marine systems. Working collectively, countries can better use and share benefits from these water systems, and implement the policy, legal and institutional reforms and investments needed for sustainable use and maintenance of ecosystem services.

Over the years, GEF support within the IW focal area has generated a range of experiences, innovations and lessons. The GEF shares this knowledge and experiences through the IW:LEARN that represents a cooperative effort of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Environment Programme (UNEP), with the involvement of all GEF Agencies.

Currently in its fourth phase (2016-2020), it has a global geographic scope.

The goal of IW:LEARN is to move from a demonstration phase where successful knowledge management services to GEF IW projects were piloted, tested and replicated, towards a scaled-up project which becomes a hub for global learning on transboundary waters, working both within and outside the GEF-financed portfolio. This enhanced role as a global knowledge hub will support the scaling-up of GEF IW investments globally on the basis of experience from more than 22 years of GEF portfolio and partner activities to improve the current and future portfolios and impacts of investments. GEF IW:LEARN supports GEF IW projects in improving their project outcome sustainability by linking them to global processes and frameworks, as well as partners at the regional and basin-levels.

The Global Water Partnership (GWP) is a global action network with over 3,000 Partner organisations in 183 countries and 13 Regional Water Partnerships. The network is open to all organisations involved in water resources management. GWP provides knowledge and builds capacity to improve water management at all levels: global, regional, national and local. Its networking approach provides a mechanism for coordinated action and adds value to the work of many other development partners.

GWP-Med is the Mediterranean Regional Water Partnership of the GWP. GWP-Med promotes action, demo application and knowledge exchange on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) and the sustainable use of water resources in the region. The organization facilitates a multi-stakeholder platform that brings together regional networks of different water disciplines and a multitude of institutions and organisations from both EU and non-EU countries.

As a longstanding partner of the GEF and its IW:LEARN projects GWP leads the execution of project activity 2.3.2 (see above) in coordination with UNECE. The project also cooperates with the UNDP Shared Waters Partnership (SWP) hosted at the Stockholm International Water Institute, the Government of Germany and the RCC. GEF incremental funds are used to support the development of the Methodological Approach.





# 1. Integrated Water Resources Management

A more detailed account of IWRM and its theoretical underpinning is found in [Annex 1](#).

IWRM is the most commonly applied water management concept, on the national level as well as in transboundary cooperation. IWRM has been defined as “a process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems” (TAC, 2000, p.22).

IWRM emerged as a reaction to the increasing pressure on water resources and a lack of coordinated resource development and management in many parts of the world. Guiding principles for action on water resources management (ICWE, 1992) are:

1. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment
2. Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels
3. Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water
4. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good

The 'I' in IWRM refers to the integration of natural and human dimensions to water resources management, referring to the water resource itself and its users, respectively. Integration is necessary both within each of these two dimensions and between them. In more concrete terms, this can refer to the integration of freshwater and coastal management or of surface water and groundwater management. In the human dimension, integration can take place between different sectors that are connected to water, for example by recognizing the role that water plays in economic development (TAC, 2000).

Three core aspects, sometimes conflicting with each other, are central to integrated management (TAC, 2000):

- **Equity:** The basic right for all people to have access to water of adequate quantity and quality for the sustenance of human wellbeing must be universally recognized.
- **Economic efficiency:** Because of the increasing scarcity of water and financial resources, the finite and vulnerable nature of water as a resource, and the increasing demands upon it, water must be used with maximum possible efficiency.
- **Ecological sustainability:** The present use of the resource should be managed in a way that does not undermine the life-support system thereby compromising use by future generations of the same resource.

Finding a balance between these core aspects is the key challenge for policy-making on IWRM (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008).

## 1.1 Basin-wide approaches

IWRM prominently includes a 'basin approach.' This means that the entire river basin (or watershed of any other shared water body) is used as the relevant scale for all management purposes rather than administrative boundaries. The basin is often referred to as the 'natural unit' of management as rivers and other water bodies do not adhere to human-made borders, but rather shape their own relevant scales. The basin approach supports a holistic perspective on water management that includes all relevant political, economic and biophysical characteristics of the basin, irrespective of the riparian whose territory they fall in (Rahaman & Varis, 2005).

Within the human dimension, the basin approach highlights the inter-connectedness of riparians within the same basin and the upstream-downstream dynamics along the river. The approach also creates an arena for policy discussion and decision-making beyond the state level, which opens up new opportunities of interaction between riparians and can allow for the inclusion of regional non-state actors. Joint management may, however, be hampered by conflicting state bureaucracies when governance settings differ per country or even per federal state.

When integrating the management of surface and groundwater it may be an issue that boundaries for groundwater aquifers do not coincide with surface water boundaries. In practice management of the two types of water is frequently divided between different institutions which may have negative consequences.

## 1.2 Supply and demand water management

Water resources management has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is prominently reflected in the rise of IWRM as the core water management paradigm. Along with this trend, there has been a slow shift from resource-development driven and infrastructure-focused supply management towards a more policy-based demand management approach that prioritizes the sustainable management of water resources (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008).

Demand management focuses on measures related to the use of water rather than to its supply. It is currently primarily used to reduce stress on water supply systems on the smaller scale, particularly during periods of potential water shortage.

## 1.3 Stakeholder participation

IWRM is built on the understanding that broad stakeholder involvement and public participation are crucial for equitable and sustainable water management. It emphasizes that for meaningful participation, stakeholders need to be able to access and have an impact on the decision-making process (TAC, 2000). This participation needs to be open to all stakeholder groups, irrespective of social status or regular involvement with policy processes, with a special emphasis on marginalized groups such as women, youth and poor who are particularly affected most by water-related problems.

Multi-stakeholder participation also needs to cover different spatial levels, reaching from local communities directly affected by any changes to the water resource over subnational and national authorities up to supranational and international organizations and networks (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008). The subsidiarity principle is highlighted within IWRM and counters state-centric water management approaches that set their focus on the national level. Subsidiarity means that processes are to be controlled and implemented at the lowest appropriate level, in the case of most policy processes the municipal level (TAC, 2000). It requires close collaboration across the different levels – from the transboundary level and down – to ensure that processes at the lower levels are aligned with processes and long-term planning implemented by the national authorities and vice versa.

Regarding public participation in water management, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), adopted by the European Commission (EC) in 2000 to promote IWRM approach in the European Union, includes three key prerequisites (EC, 2008):

The access to information on water bodies and related water management plans

The ability to participate in and influence decision-making on environmental issues

The right to review and challenge decisions made by policy makers via the legal system

In addition to the normative idea of transparent and open decision-making processes, broad and early stakeholder involvement improves the long-term feasibility of projects and cooperation processes including on the transboundary level. The active participation in decision-making and in the implementation of new strategies increases the connection of an actor with the management process, also referred to as 'ownership.' This ownership translates into a perception of pride and responsibility towards the process, encouraging the stakeholder to stay engaged with the resource management and commit to its long-term success.





## 2. Transboundary Water Resources Management

Worldwide, more than 310 watersheds and almost 600 aquifers cross the political boundaries of two or more countries and can be considered transboundary waters. International river basins cover 42 percent of the earth's land surface, serving 2.8 billion of the world's population, and account for approximately 54 percent of global river discharge (GWP 2019). Populations in different countries are intrinsically linked by transboundary basins and aquifers, making them interdependent, not just hydrologically but also economically and socially.

There are many examples where transboundary water cooperation plays an immediate positive role for the population. In UNECE (2015) approaches to identify benefits and a number of examples can be found: Improved flood mitigation mechanisms in the Elbe Basin shared between the Czech Republic and Germany; Improved water quality and re-established biodiversity in the Rhine river shared by France, Germany, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and Switzerland; A joint strategy for climate change adaptation in the Dniester river agreed on by the Riparians Moldova and Ukraine. The cooperation in the Mekong Basin shared by Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam that led to direct benefits but has also been a stabilizing factor for regional cooperation. The Lake Chad Basin Commission bringing together Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Libya, Niger and Nigeria to (among other things) establish a Multinational Joint Security Force in the Lake Chad Basin to address security challenges. In the Rusumi Falls Burundi, Rwanda and United Republic of Tanzania have agreed to jointly exploit their shared hydropower potential.

### 2.1 Basin geography and administrative boundaries

Transboundary water management does not necessarily equate to inter-state water management between two or more governments even though international law has a focus on this component. While state actors are usually prominently involved in formal cooperation processes, more localized transboundary management initiatives are often backed by local government or civil society on both sides of the border (Ide & Fröhlich, 2015).

The definition of boundaries and relevant scales by the different actors is a central factor in the management of transboundary water resources. As was pointed out in the previous section the river basin has emerged as the 'natural'



scale of water management. But the definition of a relevant watershed can be very deliberate: actors might look at an entire river basin or only at a specific portion, or only include riparians to the river itself, but not other actors within the wider basin (Sneddon & Fox, 2006). In the case of the Drin basin (see below) this can be exemplified with the cooperation on shared lakes that was initiated before the full basin cooperation was contemplated. Another example for this is the Jordan River Basin which is shared by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. Much of the recent work on 'basin-wide' management only focuses on the Lower Jordan River Basin, defined as the catchment of the Jordan River downstream of Lake Tiberias, and often excludes Lebanon and Syria as riparians. Agreements and joint institutions should aim to involve all riparian countries rather than focusing on specific portions of a basin.

Actors can define particular spatial scales, such as the local, national or regional level, as more or less relevant to the management process. This prioritization can in turn have significant impacts on the perception of actors as more or less relevant to be involved in the management process. Transboundary water management is often primarily viewed from a state-centric perspective that assigns the highest priority to actors on the national level (Warner et al., 2017; Moisiu & Paasi, 2013). From this perspective, local populations, individual communities and grass-root networks that are affected by water management and infrastructure are at risk of being excluded thus undermining the objective of sustainability.

In real life there are usually several layers of transboundary water cooperation dealing with different issues. In the Danube this can be exemplified by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) with 15 Parties, the cooperation between Riparians of the tributary Sava river basin (see below) and a number of bilateral agreements between Danube Riparians. The Danube also provides an example where cooperation on navigation has a separate river basin organization: the Danube Commission.

Interconnections between surface water and groundwater (aquifers may connect different river basins), or surface water and seas (as in the example of the Baltic Sea Action Plan) may give rise to other scales of constructive cooperation.

## 2.2 Power dynamics within the basin

Power relations between stakeholders, including, but not limited to the relations between riparian states, can significantly impact the access to and management of transboundary water resources (Swyngedouw, 2009). Power in the context of transboundary water resources that is likely to characterize cooperation can be grouped into four categories (Cascão and Zeitoun, 2010):

- **Geographical power:** based on a state's riparian position in the river basin, where an upstream position increases the level of control that an actor can exert over the water body
- **Material power:** based on economic and military power, technological advancement and international support, both financially and politically
- **Bargaining power:** based on an actor's influence over the 'rules of the game' and their ability to set the political agenda, thus deciding over the setup for the cooperation process that weaker parties need to adhere to

- **Ideational power ('power over ideas')**: based on the control over data and information that allows an actor to influence public perception and shape the discourse according to their own interest

One actor's oppressive behaviour will most likely not lead to reasonable and equitable access to benefits, can seriously damage the relationship to other actors across the basin and hamper informal, more voluntary cooperation. Sometimes the term "hydro-hegemon" is used for upstream, powerful states that sees to their own interest first taking little account of downstream needs.

## 2.3 Water management paradigms

Water resources management, particularly in transboundary cases, can be approached from different perspectives. These perspectives can have a significant impact on stakeholders' perceptions and issue definitions and may at times conflict with the perspective of others. Diverging viewpoints are very common in cooperation processes and do not need to present an obstacle to effective collaboration. It is, however, crucial to understand how different paradigms are motivated as they can carry some conflict potential that may hamper the initiation of joint management processes if unaddressed (Zeitoun, Goulden, & Tickner, 2013).

A common approach to sharing water resources is based on the quantitative allocation of water shares, where Party A gets a certain amount of water and Party B gets a certain amount of water, either as a fixed volume or as a percentage of the available resources. This approach is generally rooted in a zero-sum paradigm, based on the notion that if Party A receives a certain share of water ('wins' the share), Party B inevitably loses this share of water.

Mutual gains approaches challenge this paradigm. Sadoff and Grey (2002) outline four types of benefits that can be derived from a river through cooperation, listed in Table 1, and can thus present incentives for stakeholders to engage in mutually beneficial collaboration.

Type	The challenge	The opportunities
Type 1: increasing benefits to the river	Degraded water quality, watersheds, wetlands and biodiversity	Improved water quality, river flow characteristics, soil conservation, biodiversity and overall sustainability
Type 2: increasing benefits from the river	Increasing demands for water, suboptimal water resources management and development	Improved water resources management for hydropower and agricultural production, flooddrought management, navigation, environmental conservation, water quality and recreation
Type 3: reducing costs because of the river	Tense regional relations and political economy impacts	Policy shift to cooperation and development, away from dispute/conflict; from food (and energy) self-sufficiency to food (and energy) security; reduced dispute/conflict risk and military expenditure
Type 4: increasing benefits beyond the river	Regional fragmentation	Integration of regional infrastructure, markets and trade

Table 1. Four types of benefits related to cooperation over rivers. Source: Sadoff and Grey (2002).

Hydropower development in transboundary river basins is a prime example of potential benefit sharing among riparians. Agreements between riparian states over the construction of hydropower dams can, for instance, cover the transfer of electricity to a downstream riparian to offset a decrease in ecosystem services due to the infrastructure development.

Riparians might also choose to jointly invest in the construction of a hydropower dam and subsequently share the electricity produced by it. Downstream users might additionally benefit from more regulated and predictable river flow regimes throughout the year.

Riparian states connected through these kinds of mutual dependencies share an interest to remain cooperative with each other and to avoid conflicts.

Benefits can also be shared with local populations, especially when they are involved with or affected by water management processes such as hydropower development. Through sharing benefits, the local communities are involved in the process and might be able to participate in decision making, while compensation often only takes the form of a compensation payment or a new parcel of land in a different location (Dombrowsky et al., 2014; Suhardiman et al., 2014). Benefit sharing on the local level can therefore empower the local population to act as stakeholders in the cooperation process.

While benefit sharing can thus increase involvement from the international down to the local level and challenge zero-sum perspectives on the allocation of water, it is not immune to the impact of power asymmetries.

### 2.3.1 Securitization, politicization and technocracy

Narratives on transboundary cooperation over water generally follow one of three paradigms: securitization, politicization or technocracy.

The securitization discourse is particularly common in regions with chronically low water availability or high occurrence of natural disasters (Fischhendler, 2015). As a consequence, political actors frame water as an issue of high security relevance, even deeming it a 'matter of national security'. This notion, reinforcing a zero-sum perspective, may allow the use of more extreme measures to protect domestic water resources, which can even include the use of military force (Aggestam, 2015).

A certain water issue is politicized once it has been added to the political agenda, where it might require government attention or decisions moving forward (Mirumachi & Allan, 2007). Politicization is therefore a step down compared to the securitization of an issue. A politicized perspective acknowledges the existence of diverging political interests and the relevance of power relations at play surrounding water but does not elevate the topic to a level of existential threats or emergency procedures (Aggestam, 2015).

A technocratic approach to water management relies heavily on technical solutions to water issues rather than on political processes. It embraces a rational perspective on water and often puts emphasis on infrastructure rather than institutions. Information exchange is an important component to facilitate a technocratic approach.

There are further cases where political relations between countries do not lend themselves to any dialogue or cooperation on shared rivers. One example is the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two countries basically at war, and the lack of cooperation on the Kura-Aras river.

## 2.4 Dealing with uncertainties

Uncertainties in transboundary water management refer to situations such as lack of data, or insufficient understanding of the hydro(geo)logical system, as well as future uncertainties, most prominently related to climate impacts. In order to sustain cooperation over resources management in the longer term, institutions need to be equipped to manage uncertainties and to adapt to new developments or new information.

In addition to long-term uncertainties, fast changes to the social, geopolitical or environmental circumstances can put pressure on transboundary water management processes. This can include, for instance, shifts in weather patterns or a change in key staff members involved with the cooperation. In addition to the flexibility required to deal with uncertainties, institutional arrangements therefore also need to be resilient enough to absorb these 'shocks' without sparking conflicts or paralyze cooperation between the different parties (Earle, Jägerskog & Öjendal, 2010).

In the IW GEF approach to TWRM there are efforts included in the process to define to the extent possible data and information on the basin, and also uncertainties that need to be investigated and discussed.

## 2.5 Tools to initiate and sustain cooperation

### 2.5.1 Water diplomacy: Track I vs multi-track

Diplomatic processes play an important role in the formalization of transboundary cooperation over water. In these processes, 'Track I' refers to negotiations between state actors or governments. Tracks II and III on the other hand refer to processes that involve civil society actors or experts in place of state actors. Multi-track processes therefore refer to processes that take a wider approach to cooperation. These approaches give cooperation processes a stronger standing within the whole society and contribute to long-term support for the cooperation.

While Track I, i.e. formal inter-state negotiation, aims to directly influence political structures and power dynamics, the other tracks can mainly influence public perception or the socio-economic situation to put pressure on/interact with the political leadership. As is demonstrated in the SEE case below, a multitrack approach can pave the way for a Track I continuation.

## 2.5.2 Exchange of information and joint fact-finding

Cooperation on shared water bodies generally requires an agreement on the 'facts on the ground' such as hydrological data. The provision of relevant information by each party increases transparency and allows for the constant monitoring of compliance with agreements, i.e. with regards to water abstractions or the quality of treated wastewater that is discharged into the river. However, uncontested information as a basis of cooperation might not be available to begin with.

Joint fact-finding missions and analytical reports are therefore often the first step towards transboundary water management. In order to agree on management approaches for shared water bodies, parties first need to agree on basic facts such as runoff regimes for shared rivers or recharge rates and sustainable yields for shared aquifers. Additionally, agreed-upon data on potential problems such as environmental pollution or expected climate impacts have a crucial role in the definition of issues and the setting of an agenda for transboundary management initiatives. Susskind and Islam (2012) highlight that "for scientific or technical information to be trusted and used, it must be generated collaboratively." In GEF IW projects this corresponds to the development of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA).

The involvement of government actors from all relevant countries into these fact-finding missions facilitates the political buy-in of all riparians, i.e. their trust that data was collected truthfully and not manipulated by other parties in order to gain an advantage. Joint missions also allow for the inclusion of the regional scientific community and, by extension, the civil society, strengthening the regional commitment to the development of joint management approaches (Uitto & Duda, 2002).

Alternatively, the task of establishing the baseline facts can be 'outsourced' to a third party that enjoys the trust of all actors, in many cases an international organization like the United Nations.

## 2.5.3 International water law

International water law and global legal frameworks offer an important basis supporting the negotiation, adoption and implementation of basin-specific agreements and joint management approaches.

The 1992 Convention for the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by UNECE, and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) are the primary global frameworks setting out the key rules and principles related to the sharing of international watercourses. Key rules and principles of customary international law (see below) reflected in these instruments include:

- The principle of equitable and reasonable utilization
- The obligation to take appropriate measures to prevent significant harm
- The obligation to cooperate in good faith



- The obligation to notify and consult on planned measures
- The regular exchange of data and information
- The peaceful settlement of disputes

The principle of equitable and reasonable utilization is the 'cornerstone' principle of international water law. The principle requires watercourse states to look beyond their own borders and consider the potential impact of their water use on the interests of other riparians in the basin. In reconciling competing interests to determine equitable shares of an international watercourse for each country, factors such as the geography and hydrology of the basin, current and future needs for human consumption, agriculture and industry, and climatic and ecological factors should be considered. It is important to note that the determination of equity does not necessarily mean that each watercourse State receives an equal share of waters. Rather, an equitable share, both of the waters and the benefits thereof, will be determined based on the needs and interests of all riparians.

The obligation to take all appropriate measures to prevent significant harm to other riparian states complements the requirement to utilize waters in an equitable and reasonable manner. This generally refers to aspects such as harm to human health or aquatic ecosystems due to pollution or economic impacts of a decrease in the river flow.

Cooperation in good faith is a key obligation. Compared to the 1997 Watercourses Convention the UNECE Water Convention has a stricter demand to establish agreements and joint bodies to facilitate transboundary water cooperation.

The principles of notification, consultation and negotiation emphasize the importance of open communication among riparian states. Any state planning an activity that may have a significant adverse affect on other riparians, such as the construction of a dam, is required to notify potentially affected riparians of the plans and give them sufficient opportunity to raise any concerns over the plans and engage in negotiations with a view to reaching an agreement.

The regular exchange of data and information is another obligation and frequently much of the cooperation in different basins reflect this principle.

Finally, the peaceful settlement of disputes is an important basis for sustaining cooperation within the basin. Whenever riparians cannot agree over a certain course of action or a planned infrastructure project in one country, a dispute settlement mechanism should be agreed upon that allows the peaceful resolution. A third-party may be involved as a mediator or arbitrator.

While the international water law offers important starting points for peaceful cooperation over shared water resources, the frameworks are, strictly speaking, only binding upon those countries that have acceded to them. In the case of the UNECE Water Convention, it is very relevant for South East Europe as this convention was originally developed for the UNECE region of which 43 states are Parties. Only a minority of countries in Europe are not Party to the convention.

Customary international law is created when a widespread and representative group of countries establish a practice that they accept as being legally binding. Key rules and principles of customary international law are reflected in the global water conventions. These rules and principles, as a reflection of customary international law, are potentially binding upon all watercourse states irrespective of whether they are party to either of the global water conventions or not.

## 2.5.4 Water agreements and joint bodies

Joint organizations (or joint bodies) are the most common format for inter-state cooperation over shared water bodies, defined by agreements between riparians. They are established through the multilateral agreement itself and usually designed to address a specific task or set of tasks related to the shared water body, such as improving and further protecting the water quality of a river (Schmeier, 2015). Seen from the perspective of international water law, the UNECE Water Convention demands the conclusion of agreements and setting up of joint bodies by Parties.

Joint organizations consist of different bodies, commonly including decision-making and executive bodies comprised of representatives of the different participating governments and a secretariat tasked with technical and administrative work. Subsidiary bodies or working groups may be dealing with specific issues such as certain sources of pollution or flood protection in a specific section of the river. The exact structure of the joint organization and its individual rules of procedure depend on the particular issue it is tasked with and the characteristics of both the basin and its riparians (UNECE, 2009).

Joint bodies need to work closely with the national governments of their member countries. While they may devise basin development plans, set standards and organize exchange of data and information, the practical implementation of agreements takes place mainly on the state level and in close cooperation between the joint body and the different governments. In order to improve the linkage with governments, high-level politicians such as ministers or even heads of state can form a ministerial council as an additional body within the commission. This approach was taken, for instance, by the Mekong River Commission where the council acts as a decision-making body and strengthens the link between commission and national authorities (Schmeier, 2010; UNCEC, 2009). Usually the joint organizations are co-chaired by high-level decision makers from the countries involved.

While the joint decisions are taken by state actors, the involvement of civil society has been increasingly emphasized in recent decades. Regional guidelines like the EU Water Framework Directive require provisions for public participation in basin management and decision-making (EC, 2008). Many joint bodies have been allowing non-governmental organizations to participate in the commission's processes as observers, giving them the right to attend meetings by the commission or its sub-bodies and to provide input and proposals to the commission. The observer status does not grant the right to take part in decision-making processes (UNECE, 2009).



## 3. Advancing Cooperation among Stakeholders and across Borders

### 3.1 Regional Dialogues

The concept of multi-stakeholder dialogues as an arena of collaborative policy-making first emerged as an alternative to top-down decision making at the local and subnational level (Innes & Booher, 2003). In the context of transboundary water management, dialogues serve to establish platforms for cooperation on different levels (e.g. regional, sub-regional, national, basin-wide) and to facilitate the creation of a shared vision among the participants from different sectors and countries. They “provide an opportunity for people and institutions from neighbouring countries or with similar geographic features to discuss the outcomes of longterm regional outlook studies and set up regional information systems, find common solutions, and develop regional strategies” (ISDWC, 2004, p. 19).

Key factors for multi-stakeholder dialogues to be efficient are according to Brouwer and Woodhill (2015):

- Embrace systemic change – for example the establishment of TWRM
- Transform institutions – changing the formal and informal norms and values that shape how people think and behave.
- Work with power - understanding and influencing power structures so that they work for, and not against, the goals of your MSP.
- Deal with conflict - understanding, surfacing, and dealing with conflict is essential in developing an effective MSP
- Communicate effectively - good communication is the cornerstone of effective collaboration
- Promote collaborative leadership - people who take on formal and informal leadership roles need to support and promote the collaborative principles that form the basis of the MSP
- Foster participatory learning - MSPs need to provide spaces where learning can flourish

Regional dialogues are informal and different from the institutionalized river basin organizations, joint bodies, presented above and may include a broader range of stakeholders. They are not necessarily rooted in government activities but are instead often hosted by international organizations or civil society. However, the involvement of government actors from all relevant countries can enhance the dialogue's practical impact on formal decision-making and help propagate new insights to the sub-national level (ISDWC, 2004; Yasuda et al., 2017).

The multilateral Brahmaputra Dialogue, initiated in 2013 by the South Asian Consortium for Interdisciplinary Water Resources Studies (SaciWATERS) as a basin-wide dialogue to improve transparency and cooperation over the transboundary Brahmaputra River, is a recent example. The Dialogue initially focused on a bilateral exchange between India and Bangladesh but has since broadened to include the other two riparians to the Brahmaputra River, China and Bhutan. Starting as a Track II dialogue that brought together civil society actors from non-governmental organizations and academia, the Brahmaputra Dialogue has evolved to include governmental actors on the national and sub-national level. Specific outcomes of the Brahmaputra Dialogue so far include joint research projects by academic institutions in different countries and the increasing involvement of governmental actors with issues raised in Dialogue discussions (Yasuda et al., 2017; SaciWATERS, 2015).

Regional dialogues allow a wide range of stakeholders to participate in the identification and possible solution of issues in the shared river basin. This participatory planning process allows actors to make their voices heard and creates a sense of ownership for identified solutions. The promotion of new water management strategies devised in the regional dialogue are therefore easier among the stakeholder groups that were involved in the process (ISWDC, 2004). Additionally, through their open setup and comparatively informal structure, dialogues are often more accessible and transparent than formal ministerial processes (Innes & Booher, 2003).

The structured but informal exchange between stakeholders from a range of countries and backgrounds helps to build trust and facilitates new relationships and the creation of spin-off dialogues and initiatives on a smaller scale. Actors of similar domains might choose to form communities of practice as described above that strengthen the collaboration and open up opportunities for joint learning within the basin as a whole.

## 3.2 Communities of Practice

There is an increasing recognition that the challenge of developing nations is as much a challenge of knowledge as it is one of finances. Communities of Practice (CoPs), a concept that emerged from learning theory in the 1990s, have recently received increasing attention from several development agencies as a tool to emphasize knowledge building among practitioners. They allow development agencies to act as knowledge conveners and facilitators rather than as knowledge providers (Wenger, 2011; Johnson, 2007).

Originating from learning theory in the 1990s CoPs are, fundamentally, "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly" (Wenger, 2011). They are thus important arenas of group-based or social learning (Pahl-Wostletal., 2007; Wenger, 2000). However, over the past two decades, the concept has evolved beyond the focus on learning processes. CoPs are nowadays not just understood as a platform for communal learning, but also as a means of business management that connects people and facilitates joint initiatives across department or company boundaries (Wenger, 2011). As the participation in CoPs is voluntary, the exchange between its members is generally informal and driven by personal interest (Serrat, 2008).

Many organizations in the development and water sector are already applying communities of practice in their work. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has been employing the idea of CoPs for over a decade, promoting peer-to-peer learning activities to employees and strengthening cross-country initiatives pursuing joint visions. According to ADB information, the CoP on Water is one of the largest and most successful CoPs within this framework (ADB, 2010). Specifically targeting the global water sector, the Dutch KWR Watercycle Research Institute set up the Watershare model in 2012. Watershare is a network of different CoPs open to knowledge institutes from all over the world, where each CoP focuses on a specific water issue. Current CoPs cover the following topics: Emerging Substances, Subsurface Water Solutions, Future-Proof Water Infrastructures, Resilient Urban Water Management and Resource Recovery & Upcycling (KWR Water, 2017).

GWP's Regional Water Partnerships (e.g. GWP-Med) and Country Water Partnerships are important frameworks for CoPs. GWP is also actively creating also CoPs such as the TWRM CoP in SEE and the Drin basin, the key source of experiences used in this document as a basis for the MA. There are also other examples of GWP-initiated CoPs such as those in the MENA countries and in Southern Africa.

In addition to international development, CoPs have received increasing attention in the public administration sector. In 2014, the US Department of Energy highlighted the important role that CoPs can play as drivers of institutional change by providing new ideas and tools based on the combined expertise of a range of employees within the Department (Reed, 2014).

### 3.2.1 Establishing communities of practice

CoPs usually develop around physical gatherings or on virtual platforms. They can grow organically out of preexisting relationships between practitioners in similar fields.

Alternatively, they can be consciously set up by an organization that subsequently acts as a host to the CoP. CoPs are generally characterized by three key attributes that set them apart from less coherent groups (Wenger, 2011):

- The domain: a shared area of interest or expertise, such as the sector or specific field the members of the group are working in
- The community: an active sense of belonging based on joint activities and discussions that allow the group members to build meaningful relationships
- The practice: a focus on practical solutions, based on the sharing of knowledge and experience among practitioners

Arboleda and Serrat (2011) supplement these key attributes with three additional characteristics: formal and informal structures within the CoP, the group's mandate assigned to it by its host organization (e.g. a company or a ministry), and the intrinsic motivation based on personal interests of group members. They highlight that while CoPs are rather informal environments, sound structures and the allocation of responsibilities in the management of the community are required to maintain the set-up over a longer period of time.



CoPs are often structured along a number of levels of participation and engagement (Figure 1). The core group, surrounding the CoP coordinator, forms the administrative heart of the community. This group primarily works with the active level of members – those that regularly engage in the exchange of knowledge, participate in events and join community initiatives. Towards the 'outer' bounds of the CoP, members become less actively involved. They might engage with their fellow members on occasion as the need arises from their own work or might follow the community's activities in a passive way, e.g. by reading newsletters. The transactional level does not comprise of community members, but rather of actors that are related to the CoP in other ways, for instance by providing financial or technical support or by engaging in business relations with the CoP itself.

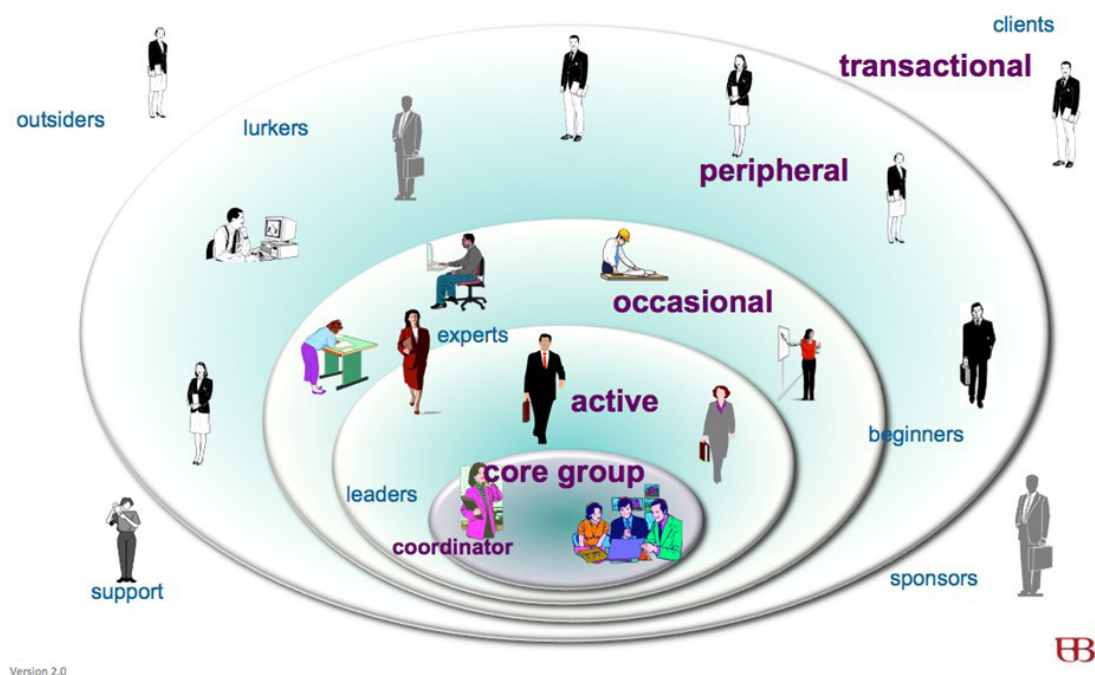


Figure 1. Levels of participation in Communities of Practice.

Source: <http://wenger-trayner.com/project/levels-of-participation/>

Across the different levels of participation, CoPs are kept 'alive' through interaction and communication between their members who share their knowledge and experiences and engage with new perspectives. This interaction can for instance be facilitated through the organization of dedicated events such as workshops or round table discussions or through the establishment of networking infrastructure, often in the realm of IT, such as online platforms, member dictionaries and regular newsletters (Wenger, 2000). The activities of CoPs are generally structured and managed along the '5D model' depicted in Figure 2, from the discovery of various experiences related to a shared interest over the synthesis of these experiences and narratives by each member up to the creation and dissemination of new knowledge within the community and beyond (Serrat, 2008).

Figure 2. 5D model for the design and management of Communities of Practice based on Serrat (2008).

There is a clear link between Regional Dialogues and the establishment of Communities of Practice, the former being an instrument, a platform to establish and energize the latter. This was demonstrated in the SEE case accounted for below. The Regional Dialogue as a basis for the establishment of a Community of Practice is a key component of the Methodological Approach. The interaction in the CoP is also beneficial for the Regional Dialogue.

### 3.2.2 Optimizing Benefits of Communities of Practice

There are many benefits to be obtained from an effective CoP, both for its members and for their surroundings. Individual CoP members will benefit from professional development, networking and accelerated learning, while the community as such creates fast problem-solving mechanisms and improves organizational performance by avoiding repetitive work and the proverbial 'reinvention of the wheel' (Serrat, 2008). In order to maximize the benefits of CoPs to its members, the Edmonton Regional Learning Consortium (ERLC) highlights three key success factors (ERLC, 2016):

- Clear identification of the domain as a shared passion of all members
- Dedicated and skilled leadership that can uphold the initial momentum of the community
- A high return on the time invested into the community by its members who are constrained in their time availability due to other commitments

Other factors contributing to the success of CoPs include a sense of ownership for the work accomplished within the community, good connections to the broader field in which the community's domain is embedded, regular activities in the right rhythm between 'too much' and 'too few', and intuitive IT setups that allow for easy communication within the community (ERLC, 2016; Serrat, 2008). If these conditions are met, CoPs may become important arenas of social learning. They allow for collective knowledge creation based on a shared pool of experiences that can catalyze new insights on best practices and, in the context of transboundary water management, improve the coherence of management approaches applied by different stakeholder groups (Pahl-Wostl et al., 2007). Due to their participatory nature, CoPs are also in a prime position to capture and reflect on complex social relations within the basin (Johnson, 2007).

In addition to opportunities for social learning, CoPs provide an informal platform for the exchange of data and information among professionals from different countries. This sort of scientific collaboration is particularly useful to share new findings across the basin and serves to supplement joint research projects that may be part of more formalized cooperation processes on different scales (Bos et al., 2007). Beyond scientific collaboration, CoPs also facilitate informal communication between individual key persons within different countries or stakeholder groups. These informal channels play an important role to maintain effective joint management in between formal meetings that may only occur one or a few times per year.



## 4. The Application of Regional Dialogue and Community of Practice

### 4.1 South East Europe

A more extensive description of the Regional Dialogue and CoP in South East Europe and the historical background is found in [Annex 2](#).

#### 4.1.1 Background

The countries in South East Europe<sup>21</sup> share a number of transboundary watercourses and the need to strengthen transboundary water cooperation in the respective basins is obvious and seen as an opportunity to establish constructive cooperation between countries.

IWRM is the dominating concept in SEE and is rarely challenged as a principle. However, in most countries there is a lack of integration in policy analysis and policy making. For example, the hydropower sector is developing largely in parallel to water policy in general. Policies such as demand management and stakeholder involvement are endorsed but weakly developed.

Water management in SEE is not a highly politicized issue. There are polarizing water-related issues such as floods, energy vs ecosystems and pollution but other political issues are generally more serious bottlenecks for water cooperation. Overall the paradigm of technocracy is dominating water relations ([section 2.3.1](#)).

An important reason for the engagement of development partners has been the general ambition to promote stability in SEE and that TWRM was and is seen as an opportunity to facilitate cooperation and improve neighbourly relations.

<sup>1</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244), Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.



Aligning policy development with EU directives is the main driving force for introducing principles for IWRM. The EU Water Framework Directive is the key instrument introduced and implemented at the national level. With its demand for coordination of basin management plans in transboundary basins, it has contributed to the push towards developing TWRM and has also helped to establish a common language for water management among experts.

The Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin signed in 2001 between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Slovenia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later the Republic of Serbia) has served as a good example for the region and led to practical experience and national “champions” in charge of water cooperation in the Parties of the agreement. It also showed that shared waters can be a catalyst for a broader cooperation.

### 4.1.2 International partners

The participation of presently all SEE countries in the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has contributed to countries internalizing a common set of principles. Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia were the two latest Parties acceding in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The convening power of the UNECE Water Convention and its Secretariat has been important in the Regional as well as Basin Dialogues (see below).

The Petersberg Process is a German initiative stemming from the «Petersberg Round Tables on Trans-boundary Waters» and launched in March 1998 as a joint effort of the German Government and the World Bank. Based on Round Tables organized during the Petersberg Process Phase I, the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety, and the World Bank decided in 2005 to initiate Phase II of the Petersberg Process.

Phase II focuses on transboundary water management activities in SEE catchment basins and is seen as complementary to the EU integration process in the SEE.

The Athens Declaration Process is a framework for regional cooperation on TWRM in SEE and the Mediterranean. It was initiated by the World Bank and Greece then chairing the European Union during the International Conference on “Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Shared Water, Shared Future, Shared Knowledge” organized 2003 in Greece. The intention was to assist SEE countries, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to prepare IWRM and water efficiency plans for major river basins and lakes with a coordinated mechanism to allow for exchange of information and experience between activities.

The two processes came together in 2004 to generate synergies and maximize the outcomes for the benefit of the SEE region and the combined process has been successfully facilitated and supported technically by GWP-Med. Several partners later joined this or supported related efforts, including the SEE countries, UNECE, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the EU with the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative. Activities implemented have constituted a Regional Dialogue on transboundary water resources management (TWRM) in South East Europe (SEE).

In the SEE process the World Bank provided technical capacity and financial strength and the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety co-funding and leadership. The involvement of Greece as an EU country in the region was a positive factor. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a cooperation framework for South East Europe, and UNECE are organizations with significant convening power that have been important for the process.

### 4.1.3 Regional Dialogue

The engagement of GWP-Med and an active interest of other development partners and SEE countries made the development of the Regional Dialogue and CoP possible. GWP-Med was an important enabling factor providing a continuous political, technical and administrative support. It successfully involved and developed cooperation with international organizations and other development partners aligning their activities to a coordinated support of transboundary water management in SEE. The deep understanding of diplomatic "rules of the game" – whether Track I or multitrack aspects - in the region that GWP-Med provided was a cornerstone for the progress achieved.

In practical terms the main objective of the involved organizations/processes to initiate the Regional Dialogue was to facilitate the dialogue on TWRM and IWRM plans for shared water bodies and also to build capacity and share experience on these issues ([Section 4.1.5](#)). A series of complementary activities (Text Box 1) was organized and provided opportunities to present and discuss transboundary water management issues in SEE. The activities revolved around the political, economic, social and environmental benefits that can be realized through effective cooperation in the management of transboundary waters. Activities focused on a set of key areas and took place at an increasingly local level to facilitate participation of a broad range of participants. Conclusions from each activity helped to guide the further planning.

The Regional Dialogue complemented the EU integration processes and other ongoing environment and water initiatives in the region. It contributed directly to the scope and objectives of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) and the GEF.

The process developed ad hoc but there was some groundrules applied from the start. The dialogue during the events should be informal, participatory and respectful. The involvement of lead experts and decision makers, and representation of important stakeholders was also important.

Besides physical meetings a dedicated homepage was established and there were attempts to organize virtual meetings such as moderated internet forums at an early stage (2005- 2007). However, this didn't work very well partly due to the limited technical opportunities of internet at that time. The forums organized only had limited participation.

Dealing with uncertainties is an important factor that was dealt with heads-on by making the effect of and adaptation to climate change an important part of the Regional Dialogue. Another "unknown" that with time surfaced was the nexus discussions where attempts were made to determine interrelations between the water and other sectors such as energy and food production.

Regular contacts and exchange of information between the international partners and a core group of experts and decision makers were key instruments to achieve good cooperation and coordination. This included monthly telephone calls but also occasional face-to-face meetings.

A large number of bilateral meetings and other kinds of interaction beyond the core group, some substantive and others more diplomatic took place. Different options were used – meetings planned during travel in the region or during conferences or similar, frequent virtual contacts including by mail. Small conflicts or disagreements sometimes elicited the contacts but in most cases the interaction was aiming to facilitate the joint understanding and strengthen the process.



#### 4.1.4 Basin-level dialogue

The Regional Dialogue was organized to facilitate the sustainable management of transboundary basins in the region at all levels by building capacities of institutions and stakeholders on TWRM. The idea was that interaction in the Regional Dialogue would indicate where countries are ready for a basin-level discussion and cooperation. This is how the basis for a multi-stakeholders dialogue discussing the management of the Drin basin could be identified and set up with support of GEF IW:LEARN.

The bottlenecks for TWRM in this basin were political rather than water-related. First, there was a difficulty in the relations between Greece and presently the Republic of North Macedonia due to the dispute related to the constitutional name of the second. Further, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244) had not been recognized as a sovereign country by all co-Riparians. However, throughout the process there has been a willingness of the Riparians to move forward in spite of these obstacles. The political sensitivity of GWP-Med and other involved organizations made it possible to avoid the stumbling blocks of political character.

The Drin River is the connecting body of a complex water system that supports a wealth of biotopes of major importance. The population of the basin is about 1,6 million people and it has 5 Riparians: Albania, Greece, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244), the Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro.



Figure 3. The Drin Basin (April 2019).

When the basin dialogue was initiated there was already a certain level of water cooperation in the three major lakes of the Drin Basin: Lake Prespa, Lake Ohrid and Lake Skadar/Shkoder.

Cooperation arrangements on these lakes with joint bodies had been or were underway to be established: Prespa Park Coordination Committee, Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission.

The idea for enhanced cooperation among the Riparians for the management of the Drin Basin was initially raised and discussed by representatives of the competent ministries and other key stakeholders during the **International Roundtable on Integrated Management of Shared Lake Basins in South-Eastern Europe** (see Text Box 1) as part of the Regional Dialogue.

Based on the conclusions of the Roundtable, and responding to the expression of interest by stakeholders, the Albanian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the GWP-Med organized in 2008 in Tirana a Consultation Meeting on Integrated Management of the extended Drin River Basin.

Following-up on the 2008 meeting, National Consultation Meetings were held in the Republic of North Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro in 2010 and 2011, and a basin level consultation meeting with stakeholders from all five Riparians in November 2011.

The meetings indicated a strong support by a range of stakeholders for a stronger basin-wide cooperation. In the discussions it was also possible to define issues that could be addressed by joint efforts of the Riparians.

#### 4.1.5 From basin dialogue to formal cooperation in the Drin basin

During the November 2011 meeting the Ministers of the water and environment management competent ministries of the Drin Riparians i.e. Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo\* and Montenegro signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin Basin (Drin MoU). The Drin MoU was developed to provide a political framework and define the context of cooperation among the Drin Riparians. It has the more detailed structure of an agreement to serve as an intermediary vehicle for immediate rather than future cooperation. This was a key step in the process where it moved from a basin dialogue phase to formal cooperation between Riparians.

The Strategic Shared Vision for the management of the Drin Basin, as developed in the framework of the Drin Dialogue, forms the Objective of the Drin MoU:

"To promote joint action for the coordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore to the extent possible the ecosystems and the services they provide, and to promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin".

In order to move towards the Shared Vision, the MoU identifies the main transboundary issues affecting sustainable development in the entire or parts of the Drin Basin ([see Annex2](#)).

Upon request from the Riparians the partners UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and GWP-Med decided to support the implementation of the Drin MoU with the UNECE Water Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive providing the legislative and policy framework.

Once the MoU was signed work started to secure some basic funding for the implementation of the MoU, including from the Riparians. Contacts were established with the GEF IW and UNDP that were positive to jointly develop a project proposal. The Inception Meeting of the project "Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water

Resources Management in the extended Drin River Basin" supported by GEF IW took place in Tirana in December 2015.

With a budget of \$5.5 million for the beneficiary Drin Riparians - Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro the project aims to, over four years, "promote joint management of the shared water resources of the transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin joint commissions and committees". The GEF Drin Project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by GWP and GWP-Med, in cooperation with UNECE.

The GEF Drin Project provided the vehicle to financially support and facilitate the implementation of the Drin MoU. Aligned in content, aims and objectives with the Drin MoU, the Project contributes during its implementation to the operationalization of the institutional structure established and enhancing scientific knowledge in the basin as a basis for informed decision-making.

The implementation of the GEF Drin Project 2015-2019 has led to a range of constructive developments not the least being the capacity of the countries to implement the EU Water Framework Directive. The development of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) along with a Strategic Action Programme (SAP)<sup>2</sup> is expected to strengthen the transboundary cooperation in line with the objective of the Drin MoU. In case the SAP will be approved by the Riparians at the political level it is likely that there will be continued funding from GEF to develop TWRM in the basin.

While overall GEF project implementation is smooth, there are challenges. Hydropower is one specific area of rapid but uncoordinated development may be negative for the sustainability of water ecosystems.

#### 4.1.6 Community of Practice in SEE and the Drin basin

In SEE the CoP on water management and cooperation was driven by the Regional and Basin Dialogues. As has been pointed out above CoPs bring together leaders and practitioners who are involved in a sector (section 3.2) and in the SEE case the access to participation was open. The CoP has helped to build and retain expertise at both the individual and organization levels. There are results confirming that collaboration on various levels has improved and cross-fertilization of good practices across countries and organizations can be demonstrated.

As with the SEE Regional Dialogue, the building of the CoP has benefited from the community of organizations involved as well as a good leadership from GWP-Med.

As a result of the Drin Dialogue and continued work in the GEF project a distinct CoP has developed in this basin. Experts and decision makers in Riparians and representatives of international organizations and donors know each other, learn from each other and can benefit from an open dialogue not only limited to various meetings.

The establishment of expert working groups under the Drin MoU has broadened the contact framework and it has become an additional advantage that the specific issues discussed in the various expert working groups (biodiversity, WFD, monitoring) contribute directly to policy development and implementation also on the national level. The development of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the GEF Drin project has contributed decisively to the further building of knowledge.

2 For further explanations on the TDA/SAP process see <https://iwlearn.net/manuals/tda-sap-methodology>.

## 4.2 Experiences from other regions

In this section some selected experiences from work on TWRM in three other regions are referred to: **Eastern Europe** (Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine), **South Caucasus** (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and **Central Asia** (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). A brief account is given on how Regional Dialogues and CoP develop and deliver results in these regions.

Although the countries sharing basins in the three regions have a common history as part of the former Soviet Union the political situation and willingness to cooperate remain complex factors. A positive factor for cooperation among the countries is a common language - Russian. In Central Asia where TWRM is most intensively needed Russian is the lingua franca among water experts and decision makers.

GWP is actively contributing to Regional Dialogues in these three regions. In the group of Central Asia and Caucasus countries GWP has made important progress to develop a Regional Dialogue and CoP by the establishment of GWP Regional Water Partnership Network for the Countries of Caucasus and Central Asia (GWP CACENA) in 2002. GWP CACENA is a well-established regional actor supporting the development of an Integrated Water Resources Management approach in policies and practice and providing a neutral platform for dialogue in these two regions. While the two regions have challenging internal political situations (see below) the choice of GWP to merge the two regions was good and there is an intensive networking between water specialists in the countries involved.

Something similar to a Regional Dialogue/CoP for the whole Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia has been supported by a set of EU projects: The EU Water Initiative National Policy Dialogues (EUWI NPD) initiated in 2006 with OECD and UNECE responsible for implementation. While most of the activities of the NPDs are national, there are also regional events for exchange of experience and components focusing on transfer of specific experience between participating countries. As with the GWP CACENA network this dialogue is not explicitly focusing on transboundary cooperation but has contributed to a better common understanding of important background factors for cooperation and principles for IWRM. In a few cases direct support to TWRM has been provided.

In all three regions cooperation between development partners could have been better and in some cases, there has even been competition.

### 4.2.1 Eastern Europe

Politically the relations between Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine are reasonably good but TWRM could be better developed. Bilateral cooperation is in place or under development between most countries but cooperation in basins such as Bug and Dnieper is limited to bilateral relations. The Neman river shared by Belarus and Lithuania would benefit from a formal cooperation framework. There is a certain level of water expert networking across the region but this could be improved.

In the so-called "Dniester process" a Basin Dialogue was initiated in 2004 with the support of OSCE and UNECE. It is an interesting aspect that the Riparians Moldova and Ukraine are downstream as well as upstream - the river flows from Ukraine to Moldova and then back to Ukraine. On the basis of the "Dniester process" and the signing of a basin



treaty in 2012 (and its ratification five years later) a GEF project started in 2017. The Transdnierster region of Moldova is not explicitly included in the 2012 treaty but it gives the possibility for its participation in the dialogue. The involvement of NGOs at times stabilized the process when political changes, government reforms and re-organizations limited the engagement of authorities. Another important factor for the positive development is the long-term engagement of OSCE and UNECE to facilitate the dialogue. As a result of the Dniester process where environmental and other relevant authorities as well as environmental NGOs have participated a CoP engaged in the transboundary basin cooperation has evolved.

A new GEF project on the two rivers Neman and Bug (tributary to the Vistula river shared by Belarus, Poland and Ukraine) is being prepared. This project will have a specific focus on the interaction between surface and groundwaters and is likely to facilitate the development of a Regional Dialogue, Basin Dialogues and CoP involving Belarus, Lithuania, Moldova and Poland. With the implementation of the EU Water Framework Directive being an important driving force the link to EU countries is important not only for the basin cooperation. It is a step forward that also groundwater aspects of the cooperation are supported by this project.

With different points of departure compared to SEE, a Regional Dialogue and CoP are under development in the Eastern Europe region. In the Dniester basin progress on TWRM has already been achieved and there is good hope that rivers such as Neman and Bug will benefit from improved cooperation in the near future.

## 4.2.2 South Caucasus

Due to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict the relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan in South Caucasus are strained and it has not been possible to develop any water (or other) cooperation between these two countries. In different frameworks and projects there have been efforts to establish a Regional Dialogue and CoP. Water experts from the three countries in the region are meeting regularly in GWP CACENA but previously also (as one of several examples) in the GEF project "Reducing Transboundary Degradation in the Kura Ara(k)s River Basin" implemented 2011-2014.

The Kura-Aras river basin is the most important transboundary water system in South Caucasus. The basin covers almost all of Armenia and Azerbaijan, and a sizeable part of populated and urbanized parts of Georgia. These countries rely heavily on the Kura-Aras river system as a principal source of water. The basin extends to Turkey and Iran but discussions on shared waters with these countries are limited. Presently Kura-Aras is one of the most significant watercourses in the ECE region without a transboundary water cooperation agreement. There are also smaller rivers shared by Armenia and Georgia that are lacking a formal cooperation framework.

A bilateral agreement between Azerbaijan and Georgia on Kura River Cooperation is being negotiated with the support of UNECE and OSCE. A final round of negotiations is needed but there is good hope that it can be signed and ratified shortly. In a UNDP-GEF project "Kura II: Advancing IWRM Across the Kura River Basin" the national capacity and bilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan and Georgia is supported with positive effects on the Regional Dialogue and CoP.

While there are elements of a Regional Dialogue and CoP in the South Caucasus region the political conflict limits their progress and impact.

### 4.2.3 Central Asia

There are two major rivers in Central Asia: the Amu Darya and the Syr Darya. Although Amu Darya is also shared with Afghanistan, the rivers were managed as national Soviet rivers and largely used up for irrigation before discharging limited volumes into the disappearing Aral Sea. Large dams and associated reservoirs were constructed in the mountainous upper reaches of the Kyrgyz and Tajik Soviet Republics to accumulate the flow during the non-irrigation season. At the same time, irrigation systems were developed on millions of ha of land in the lower reaches, i.e. in the Uzbek, Kazakh and Turkmen Soviet Republics.

In 1992, a few months after declaring their sovereignty, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan signed their first regional water agreement. This agreement confirmed the status quo of the Soviet water allocation arrangements between the countries until new modalities for water cooperation could be agreed upon. While new national water-related priorities have developed since there has been little success in finding new solutions for regional cooperation that balances water needs for hydropower upstream and use for irrigation downstreams. Environmental considerations of water management in the region are largely absent. With time water cooperation has become politicized and even securitized with a general lack of dialogue to find common solutions on issues such as seasonal water flow regimes. The past couple of years the political relations have improved but so far progress can be seen mainly in the bilateral but not basin-wide water relations.

A technical level Regional Dialogue and CoP can be found in the region. Multiple projects bring together essentially the same experts in different contexts and the leading experts and decision makers all know each other very well. While this has not resulted in any significant break-through of basin-wide discussions for either the Syr Darya or Amu Darya (in spite of mandated regional organizations such as the Interstate Commission for Water Coordination of Central Asia) there are examples of "windows of opportunity" for improved cooperation as a result of this version of Regional Dialogue. Two examples are bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan on the two rivers Chu and Talas and regional cooperation on dam safety.

In Central Asia the dialogue and coordination between projects and processes could be improved to make better use of available funding. The volume of activities initiated by donors further demands a lot of attention and time from key actors. These are aspects that should be considered in discussions between development partners on the regional level.

## 4.3 Conclusions

The Regional Dialogue/CoP process implemented in the South East Europe by GWP-Med as part of IW:LEARN has strengthened the preparedness for TWRM and lead to positive developments such as raising awareness and capacity about TWRM issues, their causes and potential solutions and supporting development of national policies that are proactive with regard to TWRM.

There are several tangible results of the SEE Regional Dialogue:

- 1.** A distinct Regional Dialogue/Community of Practice was established with a number of decision makers and experts having met regularly over a number of years.
- 2.** Capacity on transboundary water cooperation and a better understanding of its benefits were developed. It is an important aspect that much of the experiences was shared within the SEE region, for example from the Sava experience.
- 3.** The Sava cooperation was supported through the establishment of cooperation with international organizations outside the basin. A Sava Stakeholders analysis and Public Participation Plan was developed and served as demonstration for the region.
- 4.** The Dinaric Karst Aquifer System GEF project was prepared and implemented.
- 5.** A basin-level dialogue and with time formal cooperation in the Drin basin was initiated.

Based on theoretical considerations and practical experience the SEE Regional Dialogue/CoP initiative built and benefited from:

- The concepts of IWRM (section 1) and TWRM (section 2) forming the core of the structure and message reflected in the process
- The focus on benefits of TWRM
- Applying principles of international water law where appropriate
- A good understanding of the political and technical understanding of the situation in the region
- GWP-Med being well-placed to play a leading role in the process and succeeding in aligning other development partners including UN to contribute with funding and convening power
- Employing a multi-track approach for the development of the Regional Dialogue
- Selecting central themes for seminars on specific aspects of IWRM and TWRM while taking into account the status of water policy in the region to effectively develop the Regional Dialogue/CoP
- Focusing on interaction in the core group and carefully selecting the active group (Figure 1) to effectively promote the Regional Dialogue/CoP

- Having a long-term perspective thus making it possible to find the right moment to launch a specific basin-wide dialogue
- Applying a multi-stakeholder approach in the Drin basin dialogue to guarantee a broad stakeholder participation and ownership of the process
- Using the TDA/SAP methodology in the Drin GEF project leading to a common informational basis for decision making and outlining future steps of cooperation

The three regions in the former Soviet Union exhibit distinctly different situations than SEE. In Central Asia water cooperation is securitized with locked-in national positions while in South Caucasus the political situation hinders dialogue and development of water cooperation between Armenia and Azerbaijan. In all three regions international organizations such as (but not limited to) GWP, OSCE, UNECE and UNDP have contributed to the dialogue on TWRM. This demonstrates that it is always possible to initiate and support Regional Dialogues and CoPs but the specific environment will define limits for progress.

In these three regions there is a case for improving coordination and cooperation between development partners active in TWRM and water management. An improved alignment between partners would further facilitate efficient Regional and Basin Dialogues, and CoP evolution and also limit demands on time for members of the community.

It can be concluded that the successful process in SEE described in this section provides a basis for a replicable "Regional Dialogue" model. The experiences from SEE Regional Dialogue and CoP are used in the following section. For future initiatives in other regions it could be considered to follow the development more systematically by establishing at an early stage benchmarks, indicators, and to regularly evaluate progress.



## 5. The Methodological Approach Step-by-step

In this section the step-by-step initiation and development of a Regional Dialogue and the establishment of a Community of Practice is outlined including aspects to consider when Basin Dialogues can be initiated, and how formal basin-wide cooperation may be supported. The section builds on experiences from SEE and other regions, and also the theoretical background as described in sections 1-3.

The MA aims to guide the replication of the trust- and consensus-building regional dialogue model and to promote transboundary cooperation in other regions. As has been noted above the MA will be used by the GEF IW and possibly other organizations to mobilize partnerships and advance transboundary and integrated management of water resources. The MA will be tested for the organization of a Regional Dialogue in Central America starting from 2019 and based on new experiences adjusted, incorporating lessons learned for new versions.

### 5.1 Background information

When planning for and initiating a Regional Dialogue, a Community of Practice and facilitate transboundary cooperation in specific basins (a Basin Dialogue ideally leading to formal cooperation) it is important to review and learn about the region itself. What is the historic background and recent developments? How can the political, diplomatic, cultural and ethnic relations between the countries be defined? How can recent policy trends be understood? What is the political and economic status of countries? Which are the languages of communication in the region? Are there political and other bottle-necks that need to be overcome? Which are the development partners active in the region and what are they doing? Which regional organizations are engaged in cooperation between countries? Are there existing political processes that can help to drive the process?

If a Regional Dialogue is to be developed from scratch it makes sense to solicit a formal report on these aspects of background information.



It will be also be important to develop a thorough understanding of the water management situation in the region. A foundational substantive report could include the following:

- Technical information about existing water basins, national as well as transboundary
- National water management policies, institutions and priorities
- Transboundary cooperation mechanisms, institutions and needs
- Participation in relevant conventions and regional frameworks
- Capacity of experts and institutions
- Identification of important regional or subregional organizations
- Identification of key decision makers and experts

These two background reports will provide a basis for further planning. At this stage of analysis and planning the identification of benchmarks and indicators is another component to consider.

## 5.2 Selection of partner organization(s)

Ideally the Regional Dialogue should be initiated and "hosted" by an already active and trusted organization in the region. If such an organization is available and willing to take the lead, the work is simplified. If there is an institutional backbone in place it is an advantage whether there is direct funding available or not. In the SEE case GWP-Med was active even in periods when there was no ear-marked funding available which was a very positive aspect from a sustainability perspective.

The organization selected to facilitate (or co-facilitate) the Regional Dialogue should ideally have the following profile:

- Stable in terms of staffing and core funding
- Politically neutral and good relations with countries and organizations in the region and with international actors
- A basic understanding of water management and TWRM
- Proactive approach to project development and fund-raising

There may be cases where it is advantageous that more than one regional organization co- facilitate the process. A political and a technical organization could for example share the responsibility and complement each other.

In addition to relevance, stability and trust of organizations selected, it will also be necessary to consider individuals to lead the process. Involving leaders/coordinators with a personal engagement and leadership qualities is essential.

This is also the phase where a first selection of the "core" group (see Fig 1.) for the future CoP will be made. The core group will represent the inner circle of organizations (in the region and internationally) involved in the Regional Dialogue and CoP but it could also include selected country representatives with a specific mandate or status. It is an advantage if the core group would provide stability over time in terms of people involved.

## 5.3 Establish links to or create a regional political process

The establishment of a Regional Dialogue and CoP will benefit tremendously from links to existing political processes, in particular in view of the ultimate objective of putting in place formal transboundary water agreements and joint bodies.

In the SEE case there were several political processes to build on in addition to the regional status of GWP-Med. The EU approximation process was perhaps the most important. The fostering of regional cooperation and supporting European and Euro-Atlantic integration lead by the Regional Cooperation Council was also of value on the political level. The Athens Declaration and Petersberg processes promoted more directly TWRM in the region and were early on close partners with GWP-Med.

In most regions there are political frameworks in place that are supportive and with which alliances can be developed. It should be stressed that establishing these alliances demands flexibility and a good sense of diplomacy.

## 5.4 Engage Countries in the Region

With some exceptions, countries tend to be open to develop transboundary water cooperation. There may be specific concerns on the political and/or technical level and obvious differences in terms of engagement but usually it is not problematic to initiate a broad and open-ended dialogue.

There are tools available that can be used to facilitate the engagement of countries. Offers to host meetings, supply of funding for activities, opportunities to share specific knowledge and "lead" a direction of work may be attractive for official institutions and governments.

Frequently there are different positions within a country with regard to regional cooperation and TWRM. While the Foreign Office may have a positive position, more technical institutions may hesitate to engage. Lead partners aiming to initiate a Regional Dialogue should have a good understanding of these in-country differences (see step 1 above).

## 5.5 Identify and engage national and regional champions

The engagement of institutions and countries is important, but when it comes to practical activities it is a key condition for positive developments that leading decision makers and experts, "champions", are involved. This could be leading persons in ministries and official institutions, renowned scientists, representatives of NGOs or retired experts/officials. A core group of such champions would give the process a boost.

On the other hand, there may be people to avoid, people that cause conflicts and do not have the diplomatic or constructive mind-set to play a positive role.

Thought should be given to arguments that can be used to engage champions. The opportunity of working for a good cause may be enough but there may also be other options. Chairmanships of working groups, opportunities to travel are feasible examples.

## 5.6 Funding of the Regional Dialogue

The establishment and running of a Regional Dialogue is not very costly in the initiation phase. Meetings and some expert input need to be funded, organizations may need some core staff support, but this is not a question about substantial sums as has been noted in the section on SEE. It is an advantage if the lead organization(s) would be actively fund-raising and adapt to the opportunities available as has been the modus operandi of GWP-Med in SEE. It should be stressed that any break or pause in the process due to lack of funding or otherwise is a negative factor.

It is difficult to estimate an annual minimum cost to fund a Regional Dialogue as there are many factors to take into account. However, the organization of a couple of regional meetings and some core funding to fund staff of the lead partner could cost some 80- 100,000 USD.

With dedicated sources of funding from for example GEF IW the fund-raising part of the equation is made easier but for the sustainability of the efforts it makes sense to have financing from more than one source. Financing from the involved countries should also be discussed as an option.

The identification and development of long-term relations with donors is a permanent challenge. It is essential to understand what drives each individual donor and to initiate a dialogue based on common interests, not just request funds.

Obviously, the engagement and dialogue with development partners and institutions in the region are better developed if there are formal links around funding and project management. It should be noted that almost any kind of project on water management or TWRM can be designed to also support a longer-term process aiming to establish Regional and Basin Dialogues as well as CoPs.

For long-term processes such as the development of TWRM it is the weakness of present-day project formats that funding is expected to be tightly linked to formal outputs and specific time periods. Funding organizations also tend to be more interested in larger projects for administrative reasons. However, low-level funding levels but over longer

time periods where political windows of opportunity can be identified and used may lead to more sustainable results than providing a lot of funding in a transboundary basin over a restricted time period. Possibilities for a flexible use of available funding are likely to increase the cost-efficiency but may not be an option for the donor.

## 5.7 Initiating and running the Regional Dialogue

In the initiation phase of the Regional Dialogue the most important objective is to build trust among people and institutions taking into account the background information generated and the knowledge and network of the core partner(s). Participatory approaches, making sure that experts and decision makers in the region are playing a central role, focusing on the benefits of transboundary cooperation is key. Stakeholders involved already at the start of the process will generally have a more solid ownership.

While the approach should be flexible, it makes sense to establish long-term objectives and be systematic already from the start. General objectives should be included – such as building a network where people know each other personally and professionally, and building capacity on various aspects of TWRM, including specific aspects of challenges and opportunities of transboundary cooperation in selected basins.

In the planning and initiation of the Regional Dialogue the mining of knowledge and experience of stakeholders using appropriate participatory dialogue/meeting techniques is important. Sharing of experiences, cross-fertilization and dialogue-building as a result the capacities/knowledge about water resources and basin management among practitioners and stakeholders should be at the centre of the attention.

A multi-stakeholder approach makes sense for the Regional as well as Basin Dialogues and it is recommended to note the key factors for these dialogues to be effective referred to in section 3.1 (Brouwer and Woodhill, 2015).

Much effort is needed to identify the key experts and decision makers in the active group of the future CoP (see Figure 1) including national and regional champions referred to in step 5. In the early phases the recurrent participation of this selected group is especially important and should be a priority.

There are frequently activists focusing on self-interest and sovereignty aspects of water management. It is not always possible nor needed to exclude these individuals, but they should not be able to dominate the activities.

It is the aim that as a result of planned activities participants will develop a similar language and understanding of TWRM. With time new champions will emerge, dialogue between countries will be initiated and opportunities for cooperation identified. There will be representatives participating less frequently but the backbone involved in activities should be organizers (core group) as well as selected participants (active group).

Aligning as many institutional actors as possible in the Regional Dialogue is important. There are many examples of regions and transboundary basins where different organizations set up separate processes and do not cooperate as they should. The inclusive and diplomatic approach of GWP-Med in SEE should be studied carefully in this respect. By establishing a solid dialogue with important, active organizations it was possible in SEE to limit competition and strengthen cooperation. The merging of the Athens Declarations and Petersberg processes is a particularly visible example.

It is a frequent experience that stakeholder organizations are more stable over time than government institutions. In some cases, there are umbrella NGOs that bring together several organizations in a basin or region and do a good job to make sure that relevant actors are given a voice in a Regional Dialogue and contribute in an important way to the institutional memory. One example from development of transboundary cooperation in the Dniester basin shared by Ukraine and Moldova is Eco-Tiras<sup>3</sup>. Such organizations should be actively invited to take part in the dialogue.

Careful planning of this phase of the process is necessary and it is not enough just to organize meetings and other activities. Conscious links between objectives and coordinated activities are important factors. This may also help to diminish the load on key staff and experts that need to be active in many processes and projects.

A multitude of activities within or separate from projects can be seen as part of a Regional Dialogue. By looking at specific projects with "Regional Dialogue-glasses" project activities can serve the interest beyond the specific project also of the Regional Dialogue. This is particularly the case if the different project organizations and managers are involved in and aware of the Regional Dialogue. Diverse activities such as training seminars and fact-finding expeditions can be part of a Regional Dialogue and building the CoP.

In running and managing a Regional Dialogue there needs to be a balance between challenging the participants and adapting carefully to existing or emerging bottle-necks. It is important to understand if narratives on TWRM are in the area of securitization, politicization or technocracy. If, as in Central Asia, water cooperation is seen as a securitized issue or strongly politicized, it is difficult to work efficiently in an open dialogue format and specific TWRM objectives need to be long-term.

International water law should be part of the narrative in the Regional Dialogue but depending on the position of countries its place may vary. If most or all countries are Parties of global conventions a detailed break-down of international law could be used to instruct the process. However, if this is not the case it is better to discuss legal principles as a background to the search for benefits of cooperation.

## 5.8 Community of Practice

The reasoning in the MA is that a Regional Dialogue and CoP can be built in parallel with the one reinforcing the other. While direction and result of the Regional Dialogue from a political perspective will depend much on the emerging dialogue between countries and experts, the CoP can be a more planned exercise adapted specifically to the region in question. CoP components are likely to contribute to the Regional Dialogue in a positive way as seminars on various substantive issues lend themselves to discussions that are constructive for the Regional Dialogue. It is worthwhile when structuring and managing CoPs to take into account the '5D model' depicted in Figure 2.

It is key to review and take further steps to strengthen the CoP once the Regional Dialogue is in place. The CoP goes beyond the Regional Dialogue in terms of a more systematic approach to networking and exchange of experiences. Putting in place a detailed plan of seminars and training themes responding to identified challenges, an analysis of needs for participation and distribution of information and reviewing the opportunities for IT support to the CoP are steps to consider.

<sup>3</sup> Eco-TIRAS International Environmental Association of River Keepers is created by environmental NGOs of the Dniester Riverbasin.



## 5.9 Knowledge Management

The development of various instruments related to internet, information and data makes it possible today to set up a knowledge management system adapted to the needs of the Regional Dialogue/CoP relatively easily. In the knowledge management activities, the understanding and use of existing sources and networks providing information makes it possible to achieve much with limited resources.

The opportunities to use various virtual meetings such as webinars and exchanges can be seen as a component of knowledge management and should be applied to the extent possible to engage stakeholders in the process. There are experiences globally and region- wide that can be employed and fine-tuned for the specific region.

## 5.10 Permanent Dialogue

In addition to the "official" activities of the Regional Dialogue and support to the CoP, additional contacts and meetings (face-to-face or virtual) are necessary. These contacts can be of a substantive or more "diplomatic", networking character.

Frequent contacts and discussions between partners in the core group is a necessity. Weekly or monthly virtual meetings, telephone calls etc should be part of the process.

Recurrent informal meetings with other stakeholders, in particular participants of the active CoP group and official country representatives are important. There may be emerging misunderstandings and other observations that need to be addressed. In general, all possibilities to strengthen the engagement in the process and links between participants should be employed. When traveling to countries or during conferences the opportunities should be used to meet with participants/stakeholders in the process. The repetition of a coherent message will result in participants and institutions developing and maintaining a positive attitude.

## 5.11 Strengthening the Regional Dialogue

It takes time to establish the basis for future cooperation and there is a case for being patient. The development of a Regional Dialogue cannot be limited to a project with a start and an end. In the example of the Dniester process where the relations and willingness of countries to cooperate were good from the start it took 13 years from its initiation to the ratification of the basin treaty.

It is a challenge for partner organizations to keep up the engagement and find funding opportunities to keep the Regional Dialogue going over a long time period. This is why the engagement of organizations over time committed to TWRM and water management are important. In the SEE case GWP-Med and its main partners kept the focus over many years leading in the end to significant results.

There may be political set-backs in the process. A new government could have a negative attitude towards cooperation with other countries, either specifically on water issues or for other reasons. But governments and policies change and by having an active and substantive long-term Regional Dialogue underway changes in the situation, "windows of opportunities", can be analyzed and used positively.

If the Regional Dialogue "runs dry" there may be a need to change the approach. Capacity building and efforts to develop a dialogue could for a period be replaced by more technical activities and practical pilots. Active efforts to develop a new "active group" or change the set-up of partner organizations are other alternatives.

But with the right organizations and people involved time is a partner and links between countries and individuals will deepen, and ideas for new initiatives generated. While the fund-raising based on new projects may be a restricting factor, projects testing various opportunities for cooperation may also give new fuel to the Regional Dialogue.

## 5.12 Identifying and initiating Basin Dialogues

It is a challenge not only to identify opportunities but also to follow-up on these. Important factors for the identification of possible Basin Dialogues are:

1. Analysis and identification by the core and active groups of the CoP of windows of opportunities
2. Analyses and discussions in the Regional Dialogue on the situation in individual basins
3. Examples of cooperation in basins beyond the region brought to the attention of participants in the Regional Dialogue and CoP
4. Study tours to improve the understanding of TWRM

Basin Dialogues can be initiated and managed in different ways depending on the political situation and the role of national and regional champions. There is a wide range of opportunities from organizing meetings to discuss general issues to more focused events. Participation can be limited or include a wide range of stakeholders. In the Drin Dialogue the extensive use of multi-stakeholder consultations was very constructive. As was stated above it makes sense that the core group has a long-term (while flexible) perspective already from the start.

There are analytical tools that can be applied in the Basin Dialogue such as assessments of cooperation benefits, various forms of nexus or transboundary assessments (in the case of GEF projects TDAs) and discussions on shared visions for joint management.

The development of the Drin Dialogue and Dniester process can be studied in more detail (see above) to better understand which functional approaches including multi stakeholder consultations, various practical exercises and supporting existing frameworks for cooperation that can be replicated in other basins.

The long-term objective should always be to prepare the ground for formal inter-state cooperation and to use instruments such as diplomacy and international water law where applicable.

## 5.13 From an informal to a formal Basin Dialogue and basin action

In the Drin as well as the Dniester cases the formal Basin Dialogue was developed step-by-step. Much of the results from technical and informal (multi-track) dialogue could be moved without much drama to a formal (track I) platform and ultimately to a formal agreement. One reason is that in both cases the issues, reflecting even serious concerns were seen as technical by character.

It is important when moving from an informal to a formal Basin dialogue that organizations involved have a convening power that is acceptable for Riparians. UN organizations (such as UNECE or in Central Asia United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA)), and regional security organizations such as Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) are alternatives that have proven suitable.

In the process of establishing a formal Basin Dialogue much efforts are needed to make sure that all Riparians are contacted and informed, and that there are face-to-face meetings to make sure that all concerns are taken care of. This preparatory diplomatic phase is very important and if one Riparian concludes that it has not been properly consulted the whole exercise is likely to fail.

There are situations when an informal Basin Dialogue may not be a constructive option. In Central Asia with a securitized water paradigm, experts and even decision makers may not participate in an open dialogue as interstate exchanges are seen as the monopoly of the government. In that case "quiet diplomacy", high-level informal but not officially announced consultations, may be needed to find ways to establish constructive Basin Dialogues.

## 5.14 Evaluation of the process

In case indicators, bench-marks have been set up for the Regional Dialogue/CoP there are straightforward opportunities to make reality checks/evaluations regularly to check developments and help raising the standards.


Internal evaluations can be done as part of the process, but it may also be of value to bring in an external expert to review the situation in order to get an objective report. It is also worthwhile to get an independent view beyond the pre-determined indicators.

## 5.15 Sustaining the Community of Practice

A successful Regional Dialogue is likely to result in a CoP sharing knowledge and language, benefiting from opportunities for professional development and networking, establishing an alternative mechanism for problem-solving and an informal platform for the exchange of data and information among professionals from different countries.

While a continued Regional Dialogue is likely to keep the CoP alive, there are limits to the time over which a dialogue can be supported. With improved TWRM there will be fora for continued interaction between experts and decision makers: for example, basin commissions and working groups, and conferences or other stakeholder events devoted to specific basins. However, when external support ceases there may be less opportunities for community building activities. If there are opportunities to think about the sustainability and the design of continued networking while there may still be support this is an advantage.

Joint websites and/or additional activities taken on by regional organizations are opportunities. EU membership and cooperation, and activities in the framework of the UNECE Water Convention are possibilities for building of networks and exchange of experiences in a broader context.

A photograph showing three men in a meeting. One man is in the foreground, seen from the back, wearing a blue shirt. Two other men are seated across from him, one wearing a dark suit and glasses, the other partially visible on the right. They are in a room with large windows overlooking a city skyline.

## 6. Means and tools

This section will highlight generic tools used in the development of Regional and Basin Dialogues. In the description of the process in SEE above more details are given on the use of these tools in that specific context.

As has been pointed out above a wide range of tools can be used in the development of the Regional as well as Basin Dialogues. As has been previously stressed it is important to be in frequent contact with stakeholders in the networks, but the backbone of the Regional and Basin Dialogues is the organization of **roundtables**, **capacity building workshops** and **study visits**.

The regional or basin roundtables should be structured around dialogue mainly between participants from the region but also with contributions from outside the region. One objective of the roundtables is to bring information and experience to the participants, but the main objective is to step-by-step develop a common understanding of the situation, and of different viewpoints.

Capacity building workshops are more focused events on specific substantive subjects. Implementation of the EU WFD and international water law are examples of themes for such workshops. Subjects chosen should contribute to build up the understanding of TWRM.

Study visits may be an expensive exercise from the perspective of cost per person, but the participation as part of a group in a new environment has frequently given positive impetus to networking and elaboration of new ideas.

### 6.1 Ensuring stakeholders participation

The Regional Dialogue aims to include all involved stakeholders with the scope to promote building of consensus and ensure the sustainability of its outcomes. In this regard, its target is to bring to the table the following stakeholders:



- Key decision-makers including high-level representatives of Ministries, institutions and agencies that shape the institutional and administrative framework at the country level as well as the regional, transboundary basins and local levels. These may include (among others) competent Ministries, Water and/or Environment Agencies and Directorates, competent Committees/Commissions, Regulatory authorities and councils, Regional, River basin and Local management entities e.g. River basin councils, etc.
- Representatives of utilities related to water and sanitation, state owned as well as private.
- Research institutions active on water, environment agriculture etc. e.g. universities.
- Representatives of the private sector including, among others, major land owners, industry, as well as chambers.
- Groups of relevant stakeholders that are often excluded from decision-making including vulnerable populations e.g. economically disadvantaged local communities etc.
- Land and Water Use Associations and /or Cooperatives e.g. water users, water supply and sewerage, fisheries etc.
- Civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- International organizations active in IWRM and TWRM in the area.

In order to identify<sup>4</sup> the above stakeholders and key representatives, it is recommended to engage in a *Stakeholders Mapping*<sup>5</sup> exercise. Mapping of stakeholders will allow partners to have an overview of stakeholders under the categories described above.

Before the Mapping is considered final, it is advisable to share with the closest partners in order to receive feedback and possible additions or corrections.

The above does, however, not enable the full understanding of interconnections of different stakeholders and groups or their importance<sup>6</sup> and influence<sup>7</sup> on IWRM, TWRM and the Dialogue. To obtain this information, it is needed to perform a *Stakeholder Analysis* in order to understand: (I) the perception of the stakeholders regarding the transboundary issues and problems; (II) the multilevel non-linear linkages among the groups of stakeholders that are by default engaged in IWRM and TWRM. The first will assist to prioritize the focus of the Dialogue while the latter will enable activities to reflect the realities of the region, including economic and social aspects.

(I) Stakeholders of low importance: they would neither contribute much to the project implementation nor be a great obstacle;

(II) Stakeholders of medium importance: the project could be implemented without their participation/involvement, but would benefit from them;

(III) Stakeholders of high importance: they could either be of a great help in the project or could severely affect the process if not involved in it.

4 Definition of Stakeholder Identification: The process of generating a list of those affected or likely to be affected by a decision, policy or programme of action.

5 Definition of Stakeholder Mapping: A graphical representation of stakeholders in ways that assist consultants and others with such individuals or organizations.

6 Definition of importance: It denotes how critical the stakeholder is to the success of the project/policy/initiative and indicates the priority that should be given to satisfying stakeholders' needs and interests through the project/policy/initiative.

7 Definition of influence: It can be the outcome of the synergistic combination of different resources available to the stakeholder, the available level and the ability to mobilize these in favor or against a project/policy/initiative. Such resources may be knowledge, financial, technical and human resources, juridical power and the ability to mold public opinion (e.g. an organization with a strong public relations department and good connections to the media or an organization with a great number of members who support the goals of the organization).

## 6.2 Designing and planning for the Regional Dialogue

The initial steps of planning and designing the Regional Dialogue are key to its effectiveness and to producing sustained outcomes.

In this framework, it is crucial to incorporate the following aspects:

### A. Meeting the expectations of stakeholders

The aspirations of stakeholders need to be taken into account when designing the Dialogue content and its expected outcomes.

In order to understand and record the expectations of stakeholders, the following methods may be utilized:

- 1.** Collecting the conclusions drawn from previous activities in the Region that are related to the Dialogue;
- 2.** Gathering information from available sources linked to the work of other organizations and initiatives in the region related to the Dialogue such as water management, environmental/ecosystems protection etc.;
- 3.** Consulting with most significant stakeholders either in a non-formal way e.g. through telephone, informal meetings etc., or through structured consultations aiming to obtain feedback in a structured manner, e.g. interviews in the framework of the Stakeholder Analysis (see under subsection Ensuring stakeholders participation above), consultation meetings etc.
- 4.** Consulting with trusted partners to comprehend their notions and ideas regarding the expectations of stakeholders on different issues and topics.

Following the recording of stakeholder expectations, these need to be analyzed with the aim to narrow them down and shape them into tangible goals of the Regional Dialogue.

Analyzing the aspirations of stakeholders is the second key step in the process of designing the Dialogue, to which end the following steps may be followed:

- 1.** Identifying which of the expectations of stakeholders (i) cannot be met by the activity/ies of the Dialogue or any activities that are to be implemented in the future and (ii) are beyond the mandate of the partners. The organization needs to stand ready to explain this to stakeholders, whenever requested, along with the reasons as to why these expectations cannot be met. In addition, the partners may be able to direct the stakeholders to other pathways for achieving related goals towards different actors or initiatives in the region.
- 2.** Identifying which of the expectations of stakeholders could potentially be met in the future but not through the activity/ies of the Dialogue. If these are in line with the work plan of the partners, it will be advisable to keep a record of these and plan the dialogue having these as potential long-term goals.

3. Identifying which of the expectations of stakeholders could be met by the activity/ies of the Dialogue. These are to become part of the Regional Dialogue's objectives. However, in case not all can be met due to a high number or complexity, prioritizing will allow the Dialogue to be more focused contributing to its long-term success.

## B. Identifying major issues related to IWRM and TWRM in the region

Any available source of information may be used to identify issues related to IWRM and TWRM in the region.

Following identification, prioritizing issues will be necessary to select those which the Dialogue can include. The following criteria may be used (among others) to decide which issues may be considered as "major":

- Are these issues shared among countries and common in the region?
- How damaging are the consequences of these issues to livelihoods, the economy and society?
- Are these issues perceived as major by the majority of stakeholders? An efficient way to identify issues as well as secure consensus on these among stakeholders is to identify the Major Perceived Issues, through performing a Stakeholder Analysis (see under subsection Ensuring stakeholders participation above).
- Are these issues expected to cause even greater negative consequences in the future?
- Do trends related to issues reveal severe negative effects in the future, if issues are not dealt with in the present?

The (above) criteria for the selection of major issues are to be applied based on expert opinion. Further ways to secure the proper selection, would be relying on outcomes of recent studies related to each topic and asking for specific expert opinion where needed.

## C. Understanding key underlying factors affecting IWRM and TWRM in the Region

Knowledge of the situation in the region is needed when designing the Regional Dialogue. Good knowledge of the situation regarding the below is needed:

- Economic situation, including (among others) the general business environment, economic trends and employment;
- Governance, including (among others) structure and priorities of governments, priorities for further development in the region and challenges in the efficient implementation of main policies.
- Prevailing/dominant opinions of the wider public with regard to the topics examined i.e. use of water and protection of ecosystems, for example the viewing of water as public good etc.

## 6.3 Avoiding false steps and mishaps

In the process of executing the regional meetings, all partners need to exercise caution on the following subjects:

**A.** Potential conflicts among countries;

**B.** Political sensitivities in the Region. These may vary across regions and countries and may include among others:

A. Sensitivities related to the terminology and naming of areas, e.g. in the case of names of disputed territories;

B. Sensitivities regarding the use of politically sensitive words, including gender sensitive terms;

C. Sensitivities related to the use of flags instead of the names of countries.

**C.** The authority of technical level Officials of institutions. The level to which technical staff of national institutions i.e Ministries and Agencies, can take decisions without consultation with the political leadership should be clear to partners. It is crucial to know their mandate and level of flexibility and responsibility. This knowledge can inform of the extent of responses that may be expected as well as when an issue may lie beyond their decision-making ability. Addressing Officials with issues that exceed their authority may result in receiving a wrong/misinformed response or negative reaction altogether.

**D.** Preparing invitations. In the case of a multi-stakeholders meeting or a regional roundtable, the invitation needs to be signed by the heads of the organizing partners/organizations as well as the line Ministry of the hosting country or another official institution responsible for TWRM and/or the specific topic of the meeting. These may be the Ministry of Environment, Waters, Sustainable Development, Agriculture or the Agency for Environmental Protection etc. The invitation letter is prepared in coordination with main partners and delivered to the Ministry/Institution for approving and signing.

**E.** Effectively informing participants on practical aspects of the meetings. A Practical Information Note serves to provide sponsored and non-sponsored participants alike the necessary practical information including:

A. Venue;

B. Accommodation Arrangements;

C. Travel Arrangements;

D. Possibilities for reimbursement of costs incurred and how to ensure eligibility;

E. Local currency;

F. Meals;

G. Working Language;

H. Secretariat contact information;

I. Maps to the hotel/s and venue.

**F. Facilitating communication at the meetings.** In order to allow proper communication among stakeholders during the meetings, interpretation may need to be organized. If so, the following needs to be taken into consideration for arranging interpretation:

A. Simultaneous interpretation is preferred;

B. Documents related to the meeting and the background should be shared with interpreters well in advance to allow them to prepare for the terminology to be used.

Specific steps and tasks for organizing activities of the Regional Dialogue are given in sub-sections [6.5 Checklist for organizing a multi-stakeholders meeting/ roundtable](#), [6.6 Checklist - How to organize a Capacity Building Workshop](#) and [6.7 Checklist - How to organize a Study Visit](#).

## 6.4 Enabling conditions at regional meetings

In order to successfully execute the Regional Meetings forming the dialogue, different aspects need to be taken into consideration including:

### A. Carefully designing the Sessions of the Agenda:

Designing the Agenda starts with selecting a reasonable number of desired/expected outcomes of discussions (3-4). In cooperation with partners, refining the content and phrasing of tentative outcomes will be needed. Once consensus is reached, the desired content of roundtable sessions becomes clearer. The content and the sequence of sessions will play a major role in the outcomes of discussions. The themes and topics of each session should be placed in a logical order that will lead the discussion much like a script.

An extra step would be to contemplate where discussions may lead. Based on this, the partners can decide on the number of sessions and how they build on one another and gradually lead to the desired outcomes.

Selecting the type of the session and method that content should be delivered is equally important. The following main types of sessions are suggested:

- **Presentations:** In this type of session, a number of persons is requested to deliver a presentation in a specific time-frame. Questions are posed either at the end of each presentation at the end of the session if comprising of multiple presentations;
- **Facilitated discussions:** The facilitator introduces the theme, invites stakeholders to voice their opinions and facilitates exchange of views summarizing outcomes in the end;



- Panel discussions: The facilitator introduces the theme, invites specific panel members to voice their opinions and facilitates exchange of views among them;
- Working Groups' discussions: participants break into different groups. Facilitated discussions take place in different rooms/stations on different topics. Each facilitator or rapporteur presents the outcomes in a plenary session.
- World café: Discussions are essentially an upgrade to Working Groups where groups rotate around multiple rooms/stations where designated facilitators introduce and facilitate discussions on different topics. Presentation of outcomes takes place in a follow-up plenary session.

Duration of the sessions should be tailored to the type of each Session. In any case, it is not advisable to hold a session for longer than 1,5 hours without any break.

#### **B. Allowing time for resting, reflecting on discussions and side meetings in the Agenda:**

Apart from the actual sessions included in the Agenda, the overall time schedule is equally important. Starting time of the roundtable should allow participants to be rested and comfortable. Coffee breaks and lunch break should allow time to participants to rest in between discussions. These must also facilitate side discussions and "corridor" meetings among participants and partners, if needed.

The end of the meeting should be at a time which allows participants to commute to their homes and/or rest for the evening considering social norms and realities of the region.

#### **C. Setting up the meeting room/s in an efficient manner.**

The setting of the meeting room/s of each session is by no means trivial. Selecting the type of seating i.e. u-shape, classroom style, theater style, cocktail etc. will result in either facilitating or obstructing the discussions. The setting needs to be in line with the type of session as well as the overall atmosphere envisaged for this. Examples of different meeting room settings are given in sub-section [6.8 Proposed meeting room settings](#).

#### **D. Provision of information to stakeholders before and after meetings:**

Stakeholders taking part in the meetings should be well informed about the dialogue prior to the meetings. In this regard, an Information Note can be circulated prior to the meeting including the following information:

- Background and context of the dialogue including the political processes under which the meeting is taking place;
- Co-organizers and their mandate, main aspects of work;

- Place and time of the meeting;
- Aim and objectives of the meeting;
- Invitees/ targeted stakeholders for the meeting;
- Financing sources of the meeting and donors;
- Expected outcomes of the meeting;
- Which participants will be sponsored.

Following the organization of the meetings, stakeholders are generally interested in receiving follow-up information. This could include the report of the meeting including its conclusions as well as any planned next steps for enhancing the dialogue.

#### E. Receiving feedback from stakeholders:

Equally important to the providing information to stakeholders is receiving their feedback on the meetings implemented. Such feedback can be received at the end of the meeting through printed or online questionnaires. Input may be requested on the content of the meeting as well as on practical aspects of it. An example is given in sub- section [6.9 Proposed roundtable evaluation template](#).

## 6.5 Checklist for organizing a multi-stakeholders meeting/ roundtable

List of tasks per theme:

- 1) Script finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Speakers finalized
  - b) Facilitators/Moderators finalized
  - c) Rapporteurs finalized
  
- 2) Documents finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Invitation finalized
  - b) List of invitees finalized
  - c) Information Note finalized
  - d) Background Note finalized
  - e) Practical Information Note finalized
  - f) Registration Form finalized
  - g) Agenda finalized
  - h) Preliminary List of Participants finalized
  - i) Statements to the Press / Press Release finalized

- 3) Secretariat work concluded; sub-milestones:
  - a) List of Invitees ready
  - b) List of Participants finalized
  - c) Registration Forms
  - d) Reimbursement and Receipt Forms prepared
  - e) E-mailing concluded, e.g.
    - e.i) Documents sent out
    - e.ii) Confirmation e-mail of registration forms received sent out
    - e.iii) Follow-up email sent out etc.
  
- 4) Logistics; sub-milestones:
  - a) Rooming list sent to hotel
  - b) Air-tickets issued
  - c) Transfers arranged
  - d) Meals arranged
  - e) Meeting Rooms setting arranged
  - f) Interpretation arranged
 

The following needs to be taken into consideration for arranging interpretation:
  - g) Printed material prepared, i.e.
    - g.i) Name Tags prepared
    - g.ii) Name Tags printed
    - g.iii) Material to be distributed gathered and organized
  
- 5) Implementation of the Roundtable
  - a) Meetings

## 6.6 Checklist - How to organize a Capacity Building Workshop

List of tasks per theme:

- 1) Script finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Theme and sessions finalized
  - b) Speakers finalized
  - c) Facilitators/Moderators finalized
  - d) Rapporteurs finalized
  
- 2) Documents finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Invitation finalized
  - b) Information Note finalized
  - c) Background Note finalized
  - d) Practical Information Note finalized
  - e) Registration Form finalized
  - f) Agenda finalized
  - g) Preliminary List of Participants finalized
  - h) Statements to the Press/Press Release finalized

- 3) Secretariat work concluded; sub-milestones:
  - a) List of Invitees ready
  - b) List of Participants finalized
  - c) Registration Forms
  - d) Reimbursement and Receipt Forms prepared
  - e) E-mailing concluded, e.g.
    - e.i) Documents sent out
    - e.ii) Confirmation e-mail of registration forms received sent out etc.
  
- 4) Logistics; sub-milestones:
  - a) Rooming list sent to hotel
  - b) Air-tickets issued
  - c) Meals arranged
  - d) Meeting Rooms setting arranged
  - e) Interpretation arranged
  - f) Printed material prepared, i.e.
    - f.i) Name Tags prepared
    - f.ii) Name Tags printed
    - f.iii) Material to be distributed gathered and organized

## 6.7 Checklist - How to organize a Study Visit

List of tasks per theme:

- 1) Script finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Theme and main hosting institutions/organizations and sites finalized
  - b) Hosting institutions/organizations, visiting sites and speakers finalized
  - c) Facilitators/Moderators finalized
  - d) Rapporteurs finalized
  
- 2) Documents finalized; sub-milestones:
  - a) Invitation finalized
  - b) Information Note finalized
  - c) Background Note finalized
  - d) Practical Information Note finalized
  - e) Registration Form finalized
  - f) Agenda finalized
  - g) Preliminary List of Participants finalized
  - h) Statements to the Press/Press Release finalized
  
- 3) Secretariat work concluded; sub-milestones:
  - a) List of Invitees ready
  - b) List of Participants finalized
  - c) Registration Forms
  - d) Reimbursement and Receipt Forms prepared
  - e) E-mailing concluded, e.g.
    - e.i) Documents sent out
    - e.ii) Confirmation e-mail of registration forms received sent out etc.

- 4) Logistics; sub-milestones:
  - a) Rooming list sent to hotel
  - b) Air-tickets issued
  - c) Meals arranged
  - d) Meeting Rooms setting arranged
  - e) Interpretation arranged
  - f) Printed material prepared, i.e.
    - f.i) Programme of the Study Visit prepared and printed
    - f.ii) Practical Information Note printed
    - f.iii) Material to be distributed gathered and organized

## 6.8 Proposed meeting room settings

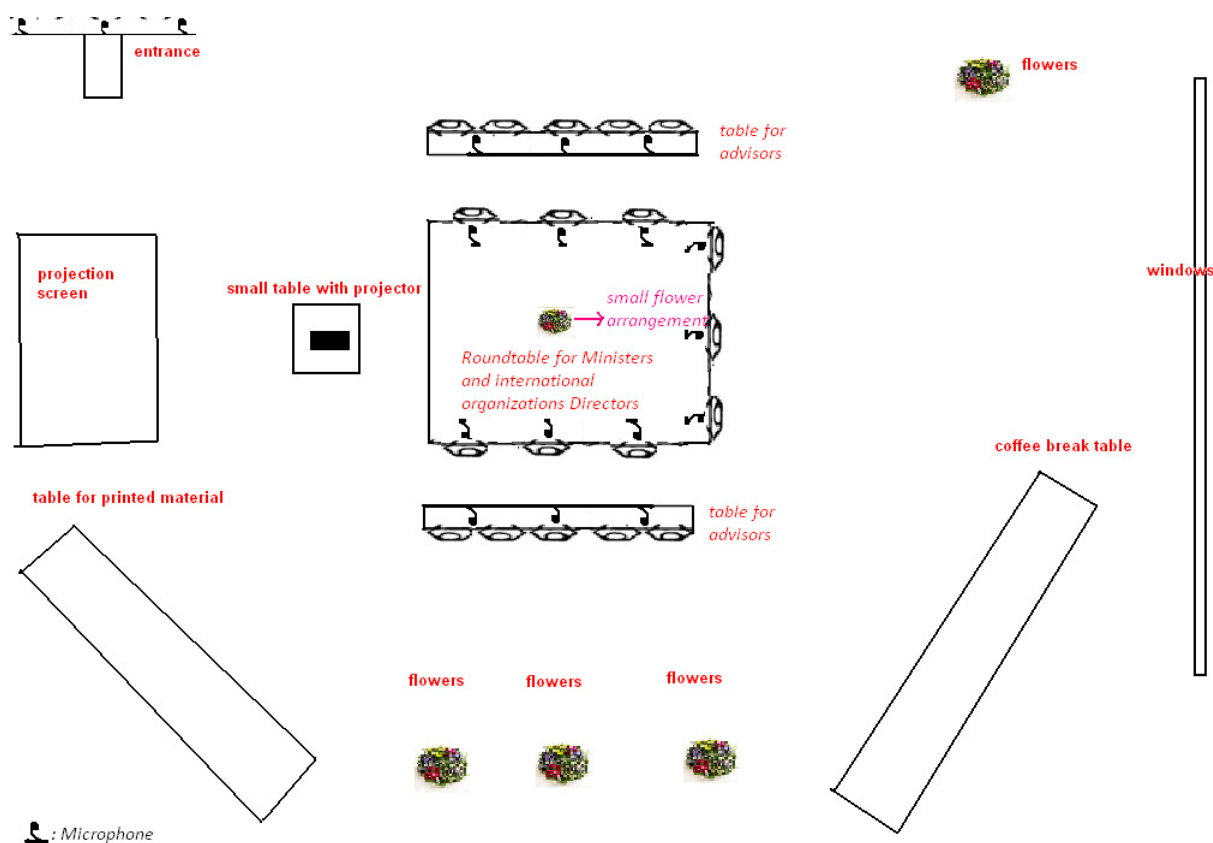


Figure 4. Ministerial meeting / High level Officials Roundtable



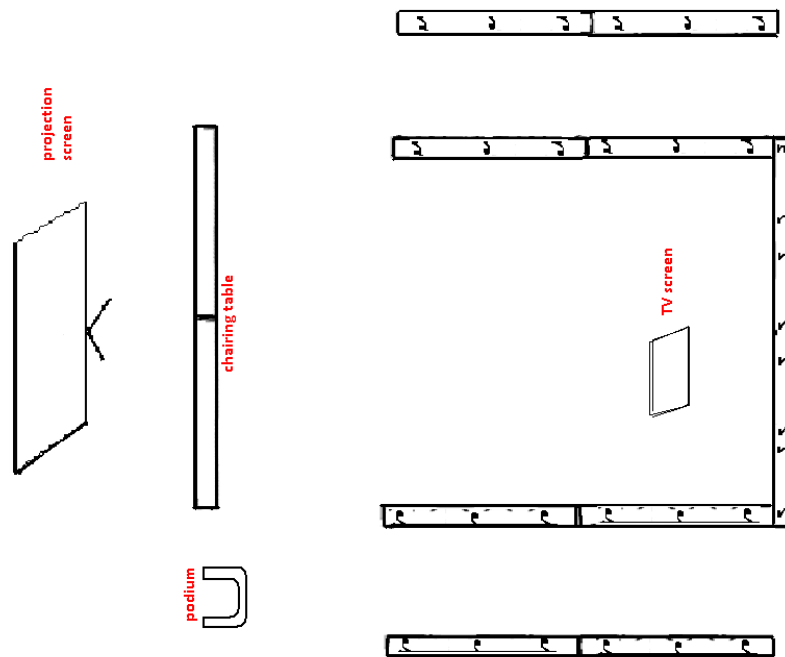


Figure 5. Multi-stakeholders meeting / Roundtable / Capacity Building meeting, option A

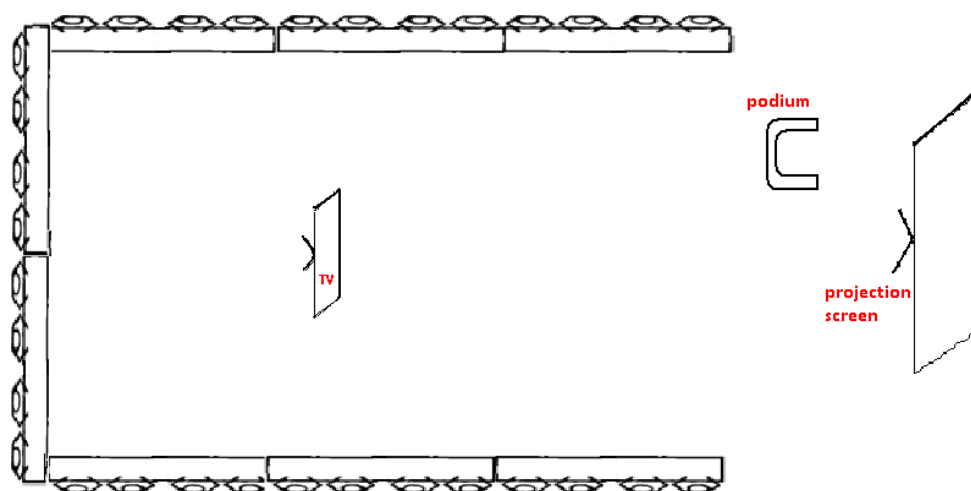


Figure 6. Multi-stakeholders meeting / Roundtable / Capacity Building meeting, option B

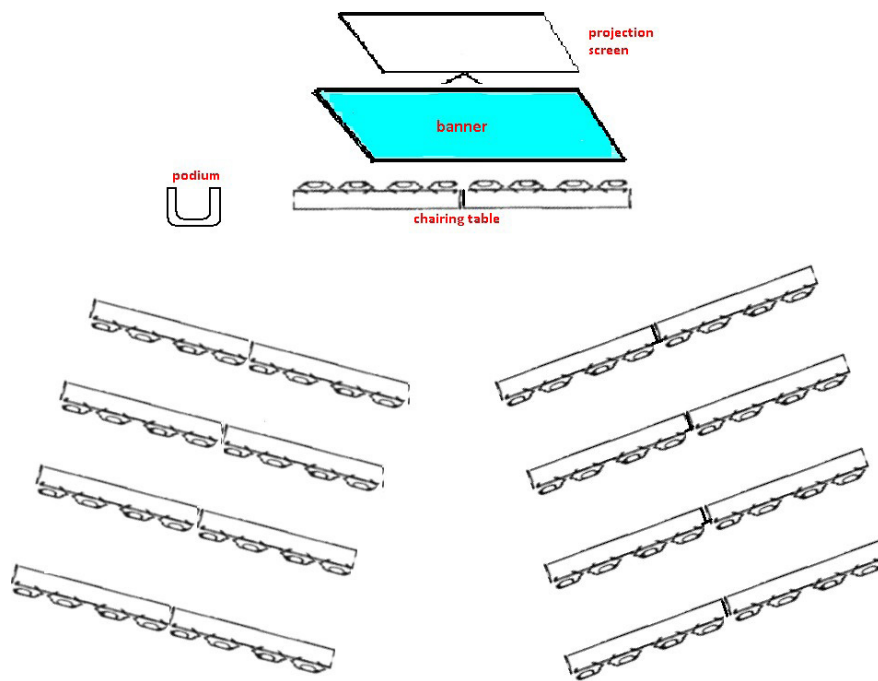


Figure 7. Multi-stakeholders meeting / Roundtable / Capacity Building meeting, option C

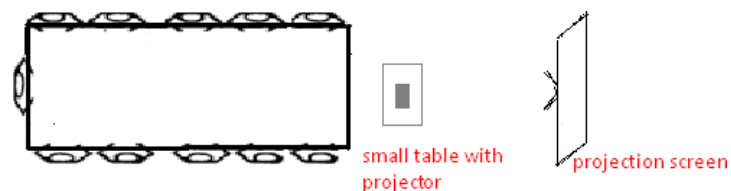


Figure 8. Small Meeting / Working Group Session / Capacity Building meeting

## 6.9 Proposed roundtable evaluation template

### Evaluation Form - Title of Roundtable

Place

Date

Through this evaluation we will get more insight about the quality of the meeting organized. Therefore, your honest and spontaneous contribution is greatly appreciated. No personal information is required to complete this form. Please, rate your level of agreement to the statements below. 1 = Strongly disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Agree 4 = Fully agree

**1.** Overall, the Roundtable has met my expectations.

1

2

3

4

**2.** The objectives of the Roundtable were clear and achieved properly.

1

2

3

4

**3.** I appreciated that I could participate actively and provide input during the Roundtable.

1

2

3

4

**4.** The Roundtable working methods (presentations, panel discussions,etc.) were suitable for their purpose.

1

2

3

4

**5.** Instructions for the working sessions were clear and provided in an organized manner.

1

2

3

4

**6.** The working Sessions were coached/moderated in a suitable way.

1

2

3

4

**7.** The location and facilities (meeting room, equipment, etc.) were appropriate for the Roundtable.

1

2

3

4

**8.** The interpretation was satisfactory.

1

2

3

4

**9.** What did you most appreciate, or think was best about the Meeting? In the future, which elements/aspects could we improve (change or add)? Please enter your answer in the below text-box!

**10.** If you have any additional comments to make, please write them in the below text-box.



# Annex 1 – TWRM and IWRM – a Background

This annex analyses in more detail the theoretical background to the processes underpinning cooperation in transboundary basins as well as integrated water resources management.

## Basin geography and administrative boundaries

Transboundary water management does not necessarily equate to inter-state water management between two or more governments. While state actors are prominently involved in formal cooperation processes, more localized transboundary management initiatives are often backed by local government or civil society on both sides of the border (Ide & Fröhlich, 2015).

The definition of boundaries and relevant scales by the different actors is a central factor in the management of transboundary water resources. Over the past decades and with the emergence of integrated approaches to resources management, the river basin has emerged as the 'natural' scale of water management, seemingly bereft of political agendas (see below, Warner et al., 2014). But the definition of a relevant watershed can be very deliberate: actors might look at an entire river basin or only at a specific portion, or only include riparians to the river itself, but not other actors within the wider basin (Sneddon & Fox, 2006). In the case of the Drin basin (see below) this can be exemplified with the cooperation on shared lakes that was initiated before the full basin cooperation was contemplated. Another example for this is the Jordan River Basin which is shared by Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, Israel and Palestine. Much of the recent work on 'basin-wide' management only focuses on the Lower Jordan River Basin, defined as the catchment of the Jordan River downstream of Lake Tiberias, and often excludes Lebanon and Syria as riparians. However, as all riparian countries are linked via the river and potentially affected by management activities elsewhere in the basin, agreements and joint institutions should aim to involve all riparian countries rather than focusing on a specific portion of the basin (Kliot et al., 2001).

Actors can define particular spatial scales, such as the local, national or regional level, as more or less relevant to the management process. This prioritization can in turn have significant impacts on the perception of actors as more



or less relevant to be involved in the management process. Transboundary water management is often primarily viewed from a state-centric perspective that assigns the highest priority to actors on the national level (Warner et al., 2017; Moisiu & Paasi, 2013). From this perspective, local populations, individual communities and grass-root networks are at risk of being rendered invisible in the discourse, even though they are often affected by for example hydraulic infrastructure development that is central to transboundary water management (Sneddon & Fox, 2006).

In real life there are usually several layers of transboundary water cooperation dealing with different issues. In the Danube this can be exemplified by the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) with 15 Parties, the cooperation between Riparians of the tributary Sava river basin (see below) and a number of bilateral agreements between Danube Riparians. The Danube also provides an example where cooperation on navigation has a separate river basin organization: the Danube Commission.

## Power dynamics within the basin

Power relations between stakeholders, including, but not limited to the relations between riparian states, can significantly impact the access to and management of transboundary water resources (Swyngedouw, 2009). Power in the context of transboundary water resources can be rooted in a multitude of factors that Cascão and Zeitoun (2010) group into four categories:

- *Geographical power*: based on a state's riparian position in the river basin, where an upstream position increases the level of control that an actor can exert over the water body
- *Material power*: based on economic and military power, technological advancement and international support, both financially and politically
- *Bargaining power*: based on an actor's influence over the 'rules of the game' and their ability to set the political agenda, thus deciding over the setup for the cooperation process that weaker parties need to adhere to
- *Ideational power* ('power over ideas'): based on the control over data and information that allows an actor to influence

Cooperation in a basin characterized by power asymmetries is usually shaped by the most powerful actor. Zeitoun and Warner (2006) distinguish between two cases: 1) the most powerful actor playing the role of a leader that is generally perceived as a positive, normative actor pushing for solutions that benefit all stakeholders, or 2) the role of a dominant oppressor that coerces less powerful riparians into compliance with the terms they set. Both cases can, on paper, lead to rather effective cooperation through agreements and the establishment of joint institutions. However, one actor's oppressive behaviour will most likely not lead to reasonable and equitable access to benefits, can seriously damage the relationship to other actors across the basin and hamper informal, more voluntary cooperation. Sometimes the term "hydro-hegemon" is used for upstream, powerful states that sees to their own interest first taking little account of downstream needs.

# Integrated Water Resources Management

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) is the most commonly applied water management concept, on the national level as well as in transboundary cooperation. In 2000, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the Global Water Partnership defined IWRM as "a process which promotes the co-ordinated development and management of water, land and related resources, in order to maximize the resultant economic and social welfare in an equitable manner without compromising the sustainability of vital ecosystems" (TAC, 2000, p. 22). This definition is still widely used.

IWRM emerged as an internationally hailed concept to water management in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as a reaction to the increasing pressure on water resources and a lack of coordinated resource development and management in many parts of the world.

Current approaches to IWRM are largely based on the outcomes of the International Conference on Water and Environment (ICWE), held in Dublin in 1992. The ICWE defined four guiding principles for action on water resources management (ICWE, 1992):

- 1. Fresh water is a finite and vulnerable resource, essential to sustain life, development and the environment**
- 2. Water development and management should be based on a participatory approach, involving users, planners and policy-makers at all levels**
- 3. Women play a central part in the provision, management and safeguarding of water**
- 4. Water has an economic value in all its competing uses and should be recognized as an economic good**

While there have been intensive debates on these principles, particularly with regards to the fourth principle and its potential implications on water access for poor and marginalized groups, the Dublin Principles remain fundamental to the key aspects of IWRM practices (Rahaman & Varis, 2005). The TAC later clarified that the contentious fourth principle relates to an economic perspective on the usage of water that is guided by the economic value and the added value of different uses, allowing for a more rational allocation of water quantities to different sectors, particularly in situations of resource scarcity (TAC, 2000).

The 'I' in IWRM refers to the integration of natural and human dimensions to water resources management, referring to the water resource itself and its users, respectively. Integration is necessary both within each of these two dimensions and between them, including the temporal and spatial distribution of resources and users and the changes to each system (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008). In more concrete terms, this can for instance refer to the integration of freshwater and coastal management or of surface water and groundwater management in the natural dimension, viewing hydrological systems not as separate entities, but as interconnected phenomena. In the human dimension, integration can take place between different sectors that are connected to water, for example by recognizing the role that water plays in economic development (TAC, 2000).

Policy-making in support of IWRM should reflect three core aspects to integrated management: equity, economic efficiency and ecological sustainability. In further detail (TAC, 2000):

- **Equity:** The basic right for all people to have access to water of adequate quantity and quality for the sustenance of human wellbeing must be universally recognized.
- **Economic efficiency:** Because of the increasing scarcity of water and financial resources, the finite and vulnerable nature of water as a resource, and the increasing demands upon it, water must be used with maximum possible efficiency.
- **Ecological sustainability:** The present use of the resource should be managed in a way that does not undermine the life-support system thereby compromising use by future generations of the same resource.

These aspects can at times conflict with each other, particularly on the issue of water pricing which puts access to water for all (social equity) against the economic value of water as a resource (economic efficiency). Finding a balance between the different core aspects is the key challenge for policy-making on IWRM (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008).

## Basin-wide approaches

IWRM prominently includes a 'basin approach.' This means that the entire river basin (or watershed of any other shared water body) is used as the relevant scale for all management purposes rather than administrative boundaries like state or county borders. In this context, the basin is often referred to as the 'natural unit' of management as rivers and other water bodies do not adhere to human-made borders, but rather shape their own relevant scales. The basin approach supports a holistic perspective on water management that includes all relevant political, economic and biophysical characteristics of the basin, irrespective of the riparian whose territory they fall in (Rahaman & Varis, 2005).

Within the human dimension, the basin approach highlights the inter-connectedness of riparians within the same basin and the upstream-downstream dynamics along the river. The approach also creates an arena for policy discussion and decision-making beyond the state level, which opens up new opportunities of interaction between riparians and can allow for the inclusion of regional non-state actors. However, joint management can also be hampered by state bureaucracy within each country when governance settings differ per country or even per federal state. A basin-approach therefore needs to be firmly placed within fitting institutional arrangements on both the state and the basin level (Molle, 2009).

When integrating the management of surface and groundwater it may be an issue that boundaries for groundwater aquifers do not coincide with surface water boundaries. In practice management of the two types of water is divided between different institutions which may have negative consequences.

## Supply and demand water management

Water resources management has undergone a fundamental paradigm shift over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which is prominently reflected in the rise of IWRM as the core water management paradigm. Along with this trend, there has been a slow shift from resource-development driven and infrastructure-focused supply management towards a more policy-based demand management approach that prioritizes the sustainable management of water resources (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008).

Demand management focuses on measures related to the use of water rather than to its supply. It is currently primarily used to reduce stress on water supply systems on the smaller scale, particularly during periods of potential water shortage. Water conservation in these cases can be promoted via technological solutions or social incentives for users, for instance through time-dependent tariffs in urban areas to reduce domestic consumption during peak hours (Beal et al., 2016). On the larger scale, demand management refers to any activities that "reduces the amount of fresh water we use, or keeps water cleaner in the course of that use than it otherwise would be" (Brooks, 2006, p. 522). This can be pursued with the help of technological innovations that improve water use efficiency, through policies targeted at reducing the quantity and quality of water used in different sectors and through the promotion of behavioral changes on the smaller scale as outlined above. Indeed, one of the characterizing features of demand management is its decentralized nature, meaning that the implementation of demand management strategies and the usage of more efficient technologies need to happen at a local level, down to the individual household or water user, reflecting the importance of broad local participation in IWRM approaches (Brooks, 2006).

## Stakeholder participation

IWRM is built on the understanding that broad stakeholder involvement and public participation are crucial for equitable and sustainable water management. It emphasizes that for meaningful participation, stakeholders need to be able to access and have an impact on the decision-making process (TAC, 2000). This participation needs to be open to all stakeholder groups, irrespective of social status or regular involvement with policy processes, with a special emphasis on marginalized groups such as women, youth and poor who are particularly affected most by water-related problems. Stakeholder participation can thereby also serve to empower underrepresented groups through their involvement in decision-making processes (O'Faircheallaigh, 2010).

Multi-stakeholder participation also needs to cover different spatial levels, reaching from local communities directly affected by any changes to the water resource over subnational and national authorities up to supranational and international organizations and networks (Savenije & Van der Zaag, 2008). The subsidiarity principle is highlighted within IWRM and counters state-centric water management approaches that set their focus on the national level. Subsidiarity means that processes are to be controlled and implemented at the lowest appropriate level, in the case of most policy processes the municipal level (TAC, 2000). It requires close collaboration across the different levels to ensure that processes at the lower levels are aligned with processes and long-term planning implemented by the national authorities and vice versa.

Regarding public participation in water management, the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD), adopted by the European Commission (EC) in 2000 to promote IWRM approaches in the European Union, includes three key prerequisites (EC, 2008):

- The access to information on water bodies and related water management plans
- The ability to participate in and influence decision-making on environmental issues
- The right to review and challenge decisions made by policy makers via the legal system

In addition to the normative idea of transparent and open decision-making processes, broad stakeholder involvement improves the long-term feasibility of projects and cooperation processes. The active participation in decision-making and in the implementation of new strategies increases the connection of an actor with the management process, also referred to as 'ownership.' This ownership translates into a perception of pride and responsibility towards the process, encouraging the stakeholder to stay engaged with the resource management and commit to its long-term success. On a smaller scale, this principle can for instance be observed in the maintenance of externally funded infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure that was developed with the active participation of the local population will subsequently often be maintained by the locals, whereas infrastructure that was constructed using external contractors and funds only will not (Boelens & Vos, 2014). The same can be said of cooperation processes. Stakeholders involved since the inception will generally buy into the cooperation on a different level than when the cooperation is imposed in a top-down manner.

## Water management paradigms

Water resources management, particularly in transboundary cases, can be approached from different perspectives. These perspectives can have a significant impact on stakeholders' perceptions and issue definitions and may at times conflict with the perspective of others.

Diverging viewpoints are very common in cooperation processes and do not need to present an obstacle to effective collaboration. It is, however, crucial to understand how different paradigms are motivated as they can carry some conflict potential that may hamper the initiation of joint management processes if unaddressed (Zeitoun, Goulden, & Tickner, 2013).

## Zero-sum games and benefit sharing

The most common approach to sharing water resources is based on the quantitative allocation of water shares, where Party A gets a certain amount of water and Party B gets a certain amount of water, either as a fixed volume or as a percentage of the available resources. This approach is generally rooted in a zero-sum paradigm, based on the notion that if Party A receives a certain share of water ('wins' the share), Party B inevitably loses this share of water.

Mutual gains approaches challenge this zero-sum paradigm. They can be based on a multiuse perspective on water that opens up possibilities for the use of a certain share of water by two or more parties, for instance through the re-use of treated wastewater in agriculture. Another approach pertains to the sharing of benefits rather than 'just' sharing water. Sadoff and Grey (2002) outline four types of benefits that can be derived from a river through cooperation, listed in Table 1, and can thus present incentives for stakeholders to engage in mutually beneficial collaboration.

Type	The challenge	The opportunities
Type 1: increasing benefits to the river	Degraded water quality, watersheds, wetlands and biodiversity	Improved water quality, river flow characteristics, soil conservation, biodiversity and overall sustainability
Type 2: increasing benefits from the river	Increasing demands for water, suboptimal water resources management and development	Improved water resources management for hydropower and agricultural production, flood- drought management, navigation, environmental conservation, water quality and recreation
Type 3: reducing costs because of the river	Tense regional relations and political economy impacts	Policy shift to cooperation and development, away from dispute/ conflict; from food (and energy) self-sufficiency to food (and energy) security; reduced dispute/conflict risk and military expenditure
Type 4: increasing benefits beyond the river	Regional fragmentation	Integration of regional infrastructure, markets and trade

*Table 2. Four types of benefits related to cooperation over rivers. Source: Sadoff and Grey (2002).*

Hydropower development in transboundary river basins is a prime example of potential benefit sharing among riparians. Agreements between riparian states over the construction of hydropower dams can, for instance, cover the transfer of electricity to a downstream riparian to offset a decrease in ecosystem services due to the infrastructure development. Riparians might also choose to jointly invest in the construction of a hydropower dam and subsequently share the electricity produced by it. Downstream users might additionally benefit from more regulated and predictable river flow regimes throughout the year. And finally, riparian states connected through these kinds of mutual dependencies share an interest to remain cooperative with each other and to avoid conflicts.

In addition to benefit sharing among riparian countries, benefits can also be shared with local populations, especially when they are involved with or affected by water management processes such as hydropower development. Suhardiman et al. (2014) emphasize the distinction between mere compensation, for example for land losses related to infrastructure development, and including the local population as beneficiaries. Through sharing benefits, the local



communities are involved in the process and might be able to participate in decision making, while compensation often only takes the form of a compensation payment or a new parcel of land in a different location (Dombrowsky et al., 2014; Suhardiman et al, 2014). Benefit sharing on the local level can therefore empower the local population to act as stakeholders in the cooperation process.

While benefit sharing can thus increase involvement from the international down to the local level and challenge zero-sum perspectives on the allocation of water, it is not immune to the impact of power asymmetries. Suhardiman et al. (2014) emphasize the need to reflect on potential biases in the decision-making process on what kind of benefits are shared and whom they are shared with.

## Securitization, politicization and technocracy

Narratives on transboundary cooperation over water generally follow one of three paradigms: securitization, politicization or technocracy. Each of them is briefly introduced below.

The securitization discourse is directly related to the paradigm of 'water security', which refers to a situation in which water is closely related to human or national safety and well-being. It is particularly common in regions with chronically low water availability or high occurrence of natural disasters (Fischhendler, 2015). As a consequence, political actors frame water as an issue of high security relevance, even deeming it a 'matter of national security'. This notion then allows the use of more extreme measures to protect domestic water resources, which can even include the use of military force (Aggestam, 2015). It also reinforces a zero-sum perspective of 'our resources' against 'their resources' as outlined above (Fischhendler, 2015).

A certain water issue is politicized once it has been added to the political agenda, where it might require government attention or decisions moving forward (Mirumachi & Allan, 2007). Politicization is therefore a step down compared to the securitization of an issue. A politicized perspective acknowledges the existence of diverging political interests and the relevance of power relations at play surrounding water but does not elevate the topic to a level of existential threats or emergency procedures (Aggestam, 2015).

A technocratic approach to water management relies heavily on technical solutions to water issues rather than on political processes. It embraces a rational perspective on water and often puts emphasis on infrastructure rather than institutions. Information exchange is an important component to facilitate a technocratic approach. While technical innovations have made important additions to transboundary water management, the purely technical, or technocratic, approach has also been criticized for neglecting the role of hydropolitics and power imbalances in many shared basins (Aggestam, 2015; Fischhendler, Dinar, & Katz, 2011).

It can also be added that there are frequent cases where political relations between countries do not lend themselves to any dialogue or cooperation on shared rivers. One example is the relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia, two countries basically at war, and the lack of cooperation on the Kura-Aras river.

## Social learning processes

Social learning in resources management refers to collective learning processes based on the evaluation of current management processes, their intended outcomes and their performance in the relevant context. Constant re-evaluation of the ongoing process and the related social learning is an important approach to identify potential problems early on and to develop the management process over time, paraphrased in the European HarmoniCOP project (Harmonizing Collaborative Planning) as "learning together to manage together" (Pahl-Worstl et al., 2007, p. 3). Van Buuren and Warner (2009, p. 421) also refer to social learning as "a process of discovery of the common will (shared value)" that improves the problem-solving capacity of all stakeholders by combining their different sets of knowledge.

Social learning processes can occur on different spatial and temporal scales, from smaller networks undergoing changes on a relatively short term up to long-term processes in the governance regime. Pahl-Worstl et al. (2007, p. 5) distinguish three levels:

- **Level 1 (micro):** short to medium time scales at the level of processes between collaborating stakeholders in collaboration processes
- **Level 2 (meso):** on medium to long time scales at the level of change in actor networks
- **Level 3 (macro):** on long time scales at the level of change in governance structure (formal and informal institutions and cultural values, norms and paradigms)

Social learning generally leads to the re-structuring of management approaches and institutions based on new insights that are gained during the management process. In order for these learning processes to yield tangible outcomes, institutional arrangements need to maintain a certain degree of flexibility that allows for adjustments (e.g. to the actors involved or the management paradigm applied) at a later point in time (Pahl-Worstl et al., 2007).

## Dealing with uncertainties

Uncertainties in water management refer to situations such as lack of in data, particularly in developing countries, or insufficient understanding of the hydro(geo)logical system, as well as future uncertainties, most prominently related to climate impacts. In order to sustain cooperation over resources management in the longer term, institutions need to be equipped to manage uncertainties and to adapt to new developments or new information.

In addition to long-term uncertainties, fast changes to the social, geopolitical or environmental circumstances can put pressure on transboundary water management processes. This can include, for instance, shifts in weather patterns or a change in key staff members involved with the cooperation. In addition to the flexibility required to deal with uncertainties, institutional arrangements therefore also need to be resilient enough to absorb these 'shocks' without sparking conflicts or paralyze cooperation between the different parties (Earle, Jägerskog & Öjendal, 2010).

## Tools to initiate and sustain cooperation

### Water diplomacy: Track I vs multi-track

Diplomatic processes play an important role in the formalization of transboundary cooperation over water. In these processes, 'Track I' refers to negotiations between state actors or governments. Tracks II and III on the other hand refer to processes that involve civil society actors or experts in place of state actors. The notion of diplomatic tracks has been further broadened over the past decades to include a whole range of other groups and actor networks beyond the state, such as the private sector, academia, the media, etc. Multi-track processes therefore refer to processes that take a wider approach to (international) cooperation, including a multitude of non-state actors alongside the state actors themselves (Diamond & McDonald, 1996). Similarly, to multi-level stakeholder involvement, these approaches give cooperation processes a stronger standing within the whole society and contribute to long-term support for the cooperation.

While Track I, i.e. formal inter-state negotiation, aims to directly influence political structures and power dynamics, the remaining tracks can mainly influence public perception (e.g. via civil society or the media) or the socio-economic situation (e.g. via the private sector) to put pressure on political leadership. Track II initiatives and similar activities based on non-governmental actors can therefore be quite impactful within society, but often need to reach out and include some governmental actors to have an effect on formal arrangements (Mapendere, 2005). As is exemplified in the SEE case below, a multitrack approach can pave the way for a Track I continuation.

### Exchange of information and joint fact-finding

Cooperation on shared water bodies generally requires an agreement on the 'facts on the ground' such as hydrological data. The provision of relevant information by each party increases transparency and allows for the constant monitoring of compliance with agreements, i.e. with regards to water abstractions or the quality of treated wastewater that is discharged into the river. However, uncontested information as a basis of cooperation might not be available in the first place.

Joint fact-finding missions and analytical reports are therefore often the first step towards transboundary water management. In order to agree on management approaches for shared water bodies, parties first need to agree on basic facts such as runoff regimes for shared rivers or recharge rates and sustainable yields for shared aquifers. Additionally, agreed-upon data on potential problems such as environmental pollution or expected climate impacts takes a crucial role in the definition of issues and the setting of an agenda for transboundary management initiatives. Susskind and Islam (2012) highlight that "for scientific or technical information to be trusted and used, it must be generated collaboratively." In GEF IW projects this corresponds to the development of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA).

The involvement of government actors from all relevant countries into these fact-finding missions facilitates the political buy-in of all riparians, i.e. their trust that data was collected truthfully and not manipulated by other parties in order to gain an advantage. Joint missions also allow for the inclusion of the regional scientific community and, by extension, the civil society, strengthening the regional commitment to the development of joint management approaches (Uitto & Duda, 2002).

Alternatively, the task of establishing the baseline facts can be 'outsourced' to a third party that enjoys the trust of all actors, in many cases an international organization like the United Nations.

## International water law

International water law and global legal frameworks offer an important basis upon which to support the negotiation, adoption and implementation of basin-specific agreements and joint management approaches.

The 1992 Convention for the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention), serviced by UNECE, and the 1997 Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses (Watercourses Convention) are the primary global frameworks setting out the key rules and principles related to the sharing of international watercourses. Key rules and principles of customary international law (see below) reflected in these instruments include:

- The principle of equitable and reasonable utilization
- The obligation to take appropriate measures to prevent significant harm
- The obligation to cooperate in good faith
- The obligation to notify and consult on planned measures
- The regular exchange of data and information
- The peaceful settlement of disputes

The principle of equitable and reasonable utilization is the 'cornerstone' principle of international water law. As the name suggests, the principle requires watercourse states to look beyond their own borders and consider the potential impact of their water use on the interests of other riparians in the basin. In reconciling competing interests to determine equitable shares of an international watercourse for each country, factors such as the geography and hydrology of the basin, current and future needs for human consumption, agriculture and industry, and climatic and ecological factors should be taken into account. It is important to note that the determination of equity does not necessarily mean that each watercourse State receives an equal share of waters. Rather, an equitable share, both of the waters and the benefits thereof, will be determined based on the needs and interests of all riparians.

The obligation to take all appropriate measures to prevent significant harm to other riparian states complements the requirement to utilize waters in an equitable and reasonable manner. This generally refers to aspects such as harm to human health or aquatic ecosystems due to pollution or economic impacts of a decrease in the river flow.

Cooperation in good faith is a key obligation. Compared to the 1997 Watercourses Convention the UNECE Water Convention has a stricter demand to establish agreements and joint bodies to facilitate transboundary water cooperation.

The principles of notification, consultation and negotiation emphasize the importance of open communication among riparian states. Any state planning an activity that may have a significant adverse effect on other riparians, such as the construction of a dam, is required to notify potentially affected riparians of the plans and give them sufficient opportunity to raise any concerns over the plans and engage in negotiations with a view to reaching an agreement.

The regular exchange of data and information is another obligation and frequently much of the cooperation in different basins reflect this principle.

Finally, the peaceful settlement of disputes is an important basis for sustaining cooperation within the basin. Whenever riparians cannot agree over a certain course of action or a planned infrastructure project in one country, a dispute settlement mechanism should be agreed upon that allows the peaceful resolution. A third-party may be involved as a mediator or arbitrator.

While the international water law offers important starting points for peaceful cooperation over shared water resources, the frameworks are, strictly speaking, only binding upon those countries that have acceded to them. In the case of the UNECE Water Convention, very relevant for South East Europe as this convention was originally developed for the UNECE region and 43 states are Parties. Only a minority of countries in Europe are not Party to the convention.

Customary international law is created when a widespread and representative group of countries establish a practice that they accept as being legally binding. Key rules and principles of customary international law are reflected in the global water conventions. These rules and principles, as a reflection of customary international law, are potentially binding upon all watercourse states irrespective of whether they are party to either of the global water conventions or not.

## Water agreements and joint bodies

Joint organizations (or joint bodies) are the most common tool to formalize inter-state cooperation over shared water bodies, established to implement agreements between riparians. They are established through the multilateral agreement itself and usually designed to address a specific task or set of tasks related to the shared water body, such as improving and further protecting the water quality of a river (Schmeier, 2015). Seen from the perspective of international water law, the UNECE Water Convention demands the conclusion of agreements and setting up of joint bodies by Parties.

Error: Reference source not found distinguishes between three common types of international river basin organizations: committees, commissions and authorities (Lautze et al., 2013). With the rise of the IWRM paradigm and its basin-approach over the past decades, there has been a trend away from bilateral organizations towards river basin organizations that include all riparian states, commonly in the form of a river basin commission (RBC) (Molle, 2009; UNECE, 2009). However, bilateral frameworks for cooperation are still very common and also easier to manage from an administrative perspective.

Type	Definition
Committee	A group of official representatives of riparian governments who meet at some frequency to discuss conditions and developments in a shared watercourse, seek compromises where appropriate, and advise their governments; no regular full-time staff are kept.
Commission	A group of officials appointed by riparian governments to undertake functions that include monitoring (e.g. data collection) and regulation (e.g. coordination, policy setting); commissions generally have full-time staff and a technical office.
Authority	A group of officials appointed by riparian governments to undertake functions that include development and implementation, in addition to some or all of the functions performed by commissions.

*Table 3. Typology of international river basin organizations. Taken from Lautze et al. (2013).*

RBCs consist of different bodies, commonly including decision-making and executive bodies comprised of representatives of the different participating governments and a secretariat tasked with technical and administrative work. Subsidiary bodies or working groups can additionally be dealing with specific issues such as certain sources of pollution or flood protection in a specific section of the river. The exact structure of an RBC and its individual rules of procedure depend on the particular issue it is tasked with and the characteristics of both the basin and its riparians (UNECE, 2009).

In addition to their own bodies, RBCs need to work closely with the national governments of their member countries. While RBCs may devise basin development plans, set standards and organize exchange of data and information, the practical implementation of agreements takes place mainly on the state level and in close cooperation between the RBC and the different governments. In order to improve the linkage between RBCs and governments, high-level politicians such as ministers or even heads of state can form a ministerial council as an additional body within the commission. This approach was taken, for instance, by the Mekong River Commission where the council acts as a decision-making body and strengthens the link between commission and national authorities (Schmeier, 2010; UNCEC, 2009). Usually RBCs are also co-chaired by high-level decision makers from the countries involved.

While the decisions in RBCs are taken by state actors, the involvement of civil society has been increasingly emphasized in recent decades. Regional guidelines like the EU Water Framework Directive require provisions for public participation in basin management and decision-making (EC, 2008). Many RBCs have been allowing non-governmental organizations to participate in the commission's processes as observers, giving them the right to attend meetings by the commission or its sub-bodies and to provide input and proposals to the commission. The observer status does not grant the right to take part in decision-making processes (UNECE, 2009).





# Annex 2 – Regional Dialogue and Community of Practice in South East Europe

This annex describes in more detail than the main text the Regional Dialogue and CoP in South East Europe.

## Background

Historically South East Europe<sup>8</sup> (SEE), Western Balkan, has been a region of conflicts where empires such as the Byzantine, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman have had an interest to expand. On the other hand, on the grassroot level people are used to settlements and regions with a mixed ethnicity and religion.

The political changes in the 1980s and 1990s including the break-up of Yugoslavia with the socialist republics becoming sovereign states attracted the attention of neighbours and the international community. The need for political stability in South-East Europe was obvious and the political process to integrate the region with the European Union was initiated.

Development partners and international organizations made funding available and established a broad range of activities to support the SEE countries. Financial support from the EU is an important factor in policy development. Several of the countries are members of the EU (Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Slovenia) and the remaining countries are all making efforts to accede to the union although with different levels of enthusiasm. Presently the economy in the region is improving.

There is no apparent dominating country in SEE. Most of the countries are in a phase of re-building the nation and economy and the dominating political force emanates from the European Union with a combination of bargaining and ideational power. The principles applied have established a relative level playing field in the region.

The countries in the region share a number of transboundary watercourses and the need to strengthen transboundary water cooperation was obvious and seen as an opportunity to establish constructive cooperation between countries.

<sup>8</sup> Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Republic of North Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244), Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia.

IWRM is the dominating concept in SEE and is rarely challenged as a principle. However, in most countries there is a lack of integration in policy analysis and policy making. For example, the hydropower sector is developing largely in parallel to water policy in general. Policies such as demand management and stakeholder involvement are endorsed but is so far weakly developed.

In contrast to regions such as Central Asia water management in SEE is not a highly politicized issue. There are polarizing water-related issues such as floods, energy vs ecosystems and pollution but overall it is more common that other political issues (for example the conflict about the constitutional name of the Republic of North Macedonia) have been bottle-necks for water cooperation rather than the other way around. Overall the paradigm of technocracy is dominating water relations [\(section 2.3.1\)](#).

An important reason for the engagement of development partners has been the general ambition to promote stability in SEE and that TWRM was and is seen as an opportunity to facilitate cooperation and improved neighbourly relations.

Aligning policy development with EU directives is the main driving force for introducing principles for IWRM. The EU Water Framework Directive is the key instrument introduced and implemented at the national level. With its demand for coordination of basin management plans in transboundary basins, it has contributed to the push towards developing TWRM and has also helped to establish a common language for water management among experts.

A first step to develop relations on transboundary water in SEE after the dissolution of Yugoslavia was taken with the Framework Agreement on the Sava River Basin signed in 2001 between Bosnia and Herzegovina, Republic of Croatia, Republic of Slovenia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (later the Republic of Serbia). The Sava agreement and cooperation has served as a good example for the region and led to practical experience and national "champions" in charge of water cooperation in the Parties of the agreement. It has also shown that shared waters can be a catalyst for a broader cooperation.

While there is a common language and recent common history among the former republics of Yugoslavia, other countries may have more difficulties with cross-border communication. With time and as a result of the preparations for EU accession English has become a language used in many settings. Overall, the language for communication is not a major bottleneck.

## International partners

The participation of presently all SEE countries in the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) has contributed to countries internalizing a common set of principles. Montenegro and the Republic of North Macedonia were the two latest Parties acceding in 2014 and 2015, respectively. The principles established by the convention are described above. The convening power of the UNECE Water Convention and its Secretariat has been important in the Regional as well as Basin Dialogues (see below). This has also been demonstrated in other regions also when some countries are non-Parties.

The Petersberg Process is a German initiative stemming from the "Petersberg Round Tables on Trans-boundary Waters" and launched in March 1998 as a joint effort of the German Government and the World Bank. Based on Round Tables organized during the Petersberg Process Phase I, the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and

Nuclear Safety, and the World Bank decided in 2005 to initiate Phase II of the Petersberg Process. Phase II focuses on transboundary water management activities in SEE catchment basins and is seen as complementary to the EU integration process in the SEE and other ongoing initiatives.

The Athens Declaration Process is a framework for regional cooperation on TWRM in SEE and the Mediterranean. It was initiated by the World Bank and Greece then chairing the European Union during the International Conference on "Sustainable Development for Lasting Peace: Shared Water, Shared Future, Shared Knowledge" organized 2003 in Greece. The intention was to assist SEE countries, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders, to prepare IWRM and water efficiency plans for major river basins and lakes with a coordinated mechanism to allow for exchange of information and experience between activities.

The two processes progressively came together in order to generate synergies and maximize the outcomes for the benefit of the SEE region. From 2004 the combined process has been successfully facilitated and supported technically by GWP-Med. Several partners later joined this or supported related efforts, including the SEE countries, UNECE, the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) and the EU with the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative. Activities implemented have constituted a Regional Dialogue on transboundary water resources management (TWRM) in South East Europe (SEE) that was expanded to Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at the end of the 3rd phase of IW:LEARN in 2016 with the participation of the UNECE and the Union for the Mediterranean.

To conclude, the main partners in the process were the World Bank providing technical capacity and financial strength and the German Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety with its funding and leadership of the Regional Dialogue. The involvement of Greece as an EU country in the region was a positive factor. The Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), a cooperation framework for South East Europe, and UNECE are organizations with important convening power that have been important for the process.

## Regional Dialogue

The engagement of GWP-Med and active interest of other development partners and SEE countries was the starting point for the development of the Regional Dialogue and CoP. The central position of GWP-Med must be stressed. The organization was an important enabling factor providing a continuous political, technical and administrative support. It successfully involved and developed cooperation with international organizations and other development partners aligning their activities to a coordinated support of transboundary water management in SEE. The deep understanding of diplomatic "rules of the game" – whether Track I or multitrack aspects - in the region that GWP-Med provided was a cornerstone for the progress achieved. The focus on benefit sharing on different levels rather than zero-sum negotiations was another important choice made early on in the establishment of the Regional Dialogue.

Key factors for multi-stakeholder dialogues to be efficient are according to Brouwer and Woodhill (2015):

- Embrace systemic change – for example the establishment of TWRM
- Transform institutions – transforming the formal and informal norms and values that shape how people think and behave.

- Work with power - understanding and influencing power structures so that they work for, and not against, the goals of your MSP.
- Deal with conflict - understanding, surfacing, and dealing with conflict is an essential step in developing an effective MSP
- Communicate effectively - good communication is the cornerstone of effective collaboration
- Promote collaborative leadership - people who take on formal and informal leadership roles need to support and promote the collaborative principles that form the basis of the MSP
- Foster participatory learning - MSPs need to be spaces where learning can flourish

The approach chosen from the initiation of the Regional Dialogue was to have a long-term perspective corresponding to a macro approach of social learning aiming for future changes of governance structures.

In practical terms the main objective of the involved organizations/processes to initiate the Regional Dialogue was to facilitate the dialogue on TWRM and IWRM plans for shared water bodies and also to build capacity and share experience on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) (See 4.1.5).

A series of complementary activities (Text Box 1) was organized and provided opportunities to present and discuss transboundary water management issues in SEE. The activities revolved around the political, economic, social and environmental benefits that can be realized through effective cooperation in the management of transboundary waters.

Activities focused on a set of key areas and took place at an increasingly local level to facilitate participation of a broad range of participants. Conclusions from each activity helped to guide the further planning.

The Regional Dialogue complemented the EU integration processes and other ongoing environment and water initiatives in the region. It contributed directly to the scope and objectives of the Mediterranean Component of the EU Water Initiative (MED EUWI) and the GEF.

The process developed ad hoc but there were some groundrules applied from the start. The dialogue during the events should be informal, participatory and respectful. It was further the aim to involve lead experts and decision makers and to have a good representation of important stakeholders.

Besides physical meetings a dedicated homepage was established and there were attempts to organize virtual dialogues such as moderated internet forums at an early stage (2005-2007). However, with only a restricted participation this didn't work very well partly due to the limited technical opportunities of internet at that time.

Dealing with uncertainties is an important factor that was dealt with heads-on by making the effect of and adaptation to climate change an important part of the Regional Dialogue.

Another "unknown" that with time surfaced was the nexus discussions where attempts were made to determine interrelations between the water and other sectors such as energy and food production.

Regular contacts and exchange of information between the international partners and a core group of experts and decision makers were key instruments to achieve good cooperation and coordination. This included face-to-face meetings and monthly telephone calls.

The process also included a large number of bilateral meetings and other kinds of interaction beyond the core group, some substantive and others more diplomatic. Different options were used – meetings planned during travel in the region or during conferences or similar, frequent virtual contacts including by mail. Small conflicts or disagreements sometimes elicited the contacts but in most cases the interaction was aiming to facilitate the joint understanding and strengthen the process.

There are several tangible results of the SEE Regional Dialogue.

- 1.** A distinct Community of Practice was established with a number of decision makers and experts having met regularly over a number of years (see below)
- 2.** Capacity on transboundary water cooperation and a better understanding of its benefits were developed. It is an important aspect that much of the experiences were shared between the SEE countries, for example from the Sava experience.
- 3.** The Sava cooperation was supported through the establishment of cooperation with international organizations outside the basin, A Stakeholders analysis and Public Participation Plan was developed and served as demonstration for the region.
- 4.** The Dinaric Karst Aquifer System GEF project was prepared and implemented.
- 5.** A basin-level dialogue and with time formal cooperation in the Drin basin was initiated (see the following section)

## Basin-level dialogue

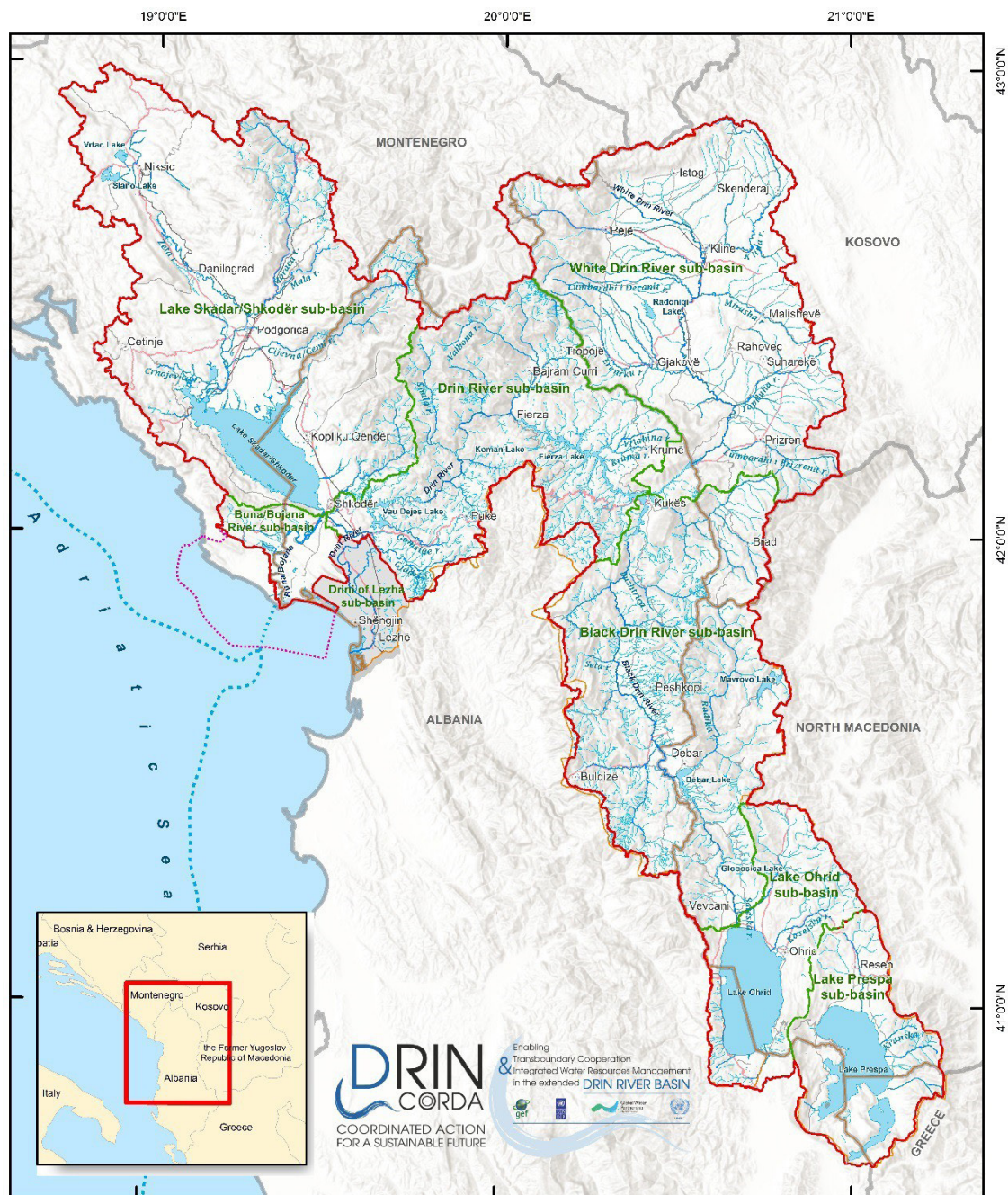
The Regional Dialogue was organized to facilitate the sustainable management of transboundary basins at all levels by building capacities of institutions and stakeholders on TWRM. The idea was that interaction in the Regional Dialogue would indicate where countries are ready for a basin-level discussion and cooperation. On the basis of conclusions from the SEE Regional Dialogue and with support from among others GEF IW:LEARN a multi- stakeholders dialogue discussing the management of the Drin basin was set up (see below).

Water is a catalyst for cooperation in the case of Drin but there were political bottlenecks. First, there was a difficulty in the relations between Greece and presently the Republic of North Macedonia due to the dispute related to the constitutional name of the second.

Further, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244) has not been recognized as a sovereign country by all co-Riparians. However, throughout the process there has been a willingness of the Riparians to move forward in spite of these obstacles. The political sensitivity of GWP-Med and other involved organizations made it possible to avoid these and other stumbling blocks of political character.

The Drin River is the connecting body of a complex water system that supports a wealth of biotopes of major importance. The population of the basin is about 1,6 million people and it has 5 Riparians: Albania, Greece, Kosovo (UN administered territory under UN Security Council resolution 1244), the Republic of North Macedonia and Montenegro.





Map of the extended Drin Basin

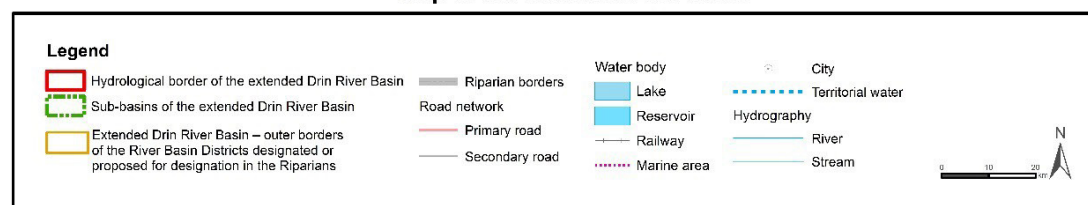


Figure 9. The Drin Basin (April 2019)

It is important to note that there already was a certain level of water cooperation in the three major lakes of the Drin Basin: Lake Prespa, Lake Ohrid and Lake Skadar/Shkoder. Cooperation arrangements on these lakes with joint bodies had been or were underway to be established: Prespa Park Coordination Committee, Lake Ohrid Watershed Committee, Skadar/Shkoder Lake Management Commission.



The idea for enhanced cooperation among the Riparians for the management of the Drin Basin was initially raised and discussed by representatives of the competent ministries and other key stakeholders during the **International Roundtable on Integrated Management of Shared Lake Basins in South-Eastern Europe**, organized under the Petersberg Phase II/Athens Declaration Process and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) IW:LEARN Programme, in Ohrid, in October 2006 (see Text Box 1) as part of the Regional Dialogue.

Based on the conclusions of the Roundtable, and responding to the expression of interest by stakeholders, the Albanian Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Water Administration, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the GWP-Med organized in 2008 in Tirana the **Consultation Meeting on Integrated Management of the extended Drin River Basin**, with the financial support of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety.

Following-up on the 2008 meeting, National Consultation Meetings were held in the Republic of Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro in 2010 and 2011, and a basin level consultation meeting with stakeholders from all five Riparians was organized in November 2011.

The consultation meetings indicated a strong support by a range of stakeholders for a stronger basin-wide cooperation. In the discussions it was also possible to define a number of issues that could be addressed by joint efforts of the Riparians.

Throughout the Drin dialogue support was provided by GWP-Med and the UN Economic Commission for Europe working in the framework of the Petersberg Phase II / Athens Declaration Process.

## From basin dialogue to formal cooperation in the Drin basin

During the November 2011 meeting the Ministers of the water and environment management competent ministries of the Drin Riparians i.e. Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Greece, Kosovo\* and Montenegro signed the Memorandum of Understanding for the Management of the Extended Transboundary Drin Basin (Drin MoU). The Drin MoU was developed to provide a political framework and define the context of cooperation among the Drin Riparians. It has the more detailed structure of an agreement to serve as an intermediary vehicle for immediate cooperation rather than expected cooperation. This is a key step in the process where it moved from a dialogue phase to formal cooperation between Riparians.

The Strategic Shared Vision for the management of the Drin Basin, as developed in the framework of the Drin Dialogue, forms the Objective of the Drin MoU:

"To promote joint action for the coordinated integrated management of the shared water resources in the Drin Basin, as a means to safeguard and restore to the extent possible the ecosystems and the services they provide, and to promote sustainable development across the Drin Basin".

In order to move towards the Shared Vision, the MoU identifies the main transboundary issues affecting sustainable development in the entire or parts of the Drin Basin.

The Parties agreed in the MoU to undertake concrete short-, medium- and long-term actions to work towards the integrated management of the Basin with the preparation of an Integrated Drin Basin Management Plan as the long-term objective. These actions include:

- Improving access to comprehensive data and adequate information to fully understand the current state of the environment and the water resources and the hydrologic system (including surface, underground and coastal waters) as well as ecosystems of the Drin Basin;
- Establishing conditions for a sustainable use of water and other natural resources;
- Developing cooperation and measures to minimize flooding especially in the lower parts of the Drin Basin;
- Improving management and appropriate disposal of solid wastes;
- Decreasing nutrient pollution deriving from untreated or poorly treated wastewater discharges and unsustainable agricultural practices;
- Decreasing pollution from hazardous substances such as heavy metals and pesticides;
- Minimizing effects of hydro-morphologic interventions that alter the nature of the hydrologic system and the supported ecosystems, resulting in their deterioration.

One additional longer-term objective of the MoU is the preparation of a formal cooperation agreement.

Upon request from the Riparians the partners UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and GWP-Med decided to support the implementation of the Drin MoU with the UNECE Water Convention and the EU Water Framework Directive providing the legislative and policy framework.

Once the MoU was signed work started to secure some basic funding for the implementation of the MoU, including from the Riparians. Contacts were established with the GEF IW and UNDP that were positive to jointly develop a project proposal.

After a period of preparations, the Inception Meeting of the project "Enabling Transboundary Cooperation and Integrated Water Resources Management in the extended Drin River Basin" supported by GEF IW took place in Tirana in December 2015. At the meeting more than 100 representatives of Drin Riparians' government institutions, national and local stakeholders as well as of intergovernmental, international and regional organizations supporting activities in the Drin River Basin exchanged views on management priorities and the Drin institutional process the Project was prepared to support. The ultimate goal was defined as a shift of mentality from a potentially conflicting sharing of waters among Riparians to a sharing of benefits among stakeholders.

With a budget of \$5.5 million for the beneficiary Drin Riparians - Albania, the Republic of North Macedonia, Kosovo and Montenegro the project aims to, over four years, "promote joint management of the shared water resources of the transboundary Drin River Basin, including coordination mechanisms among the various sub-basin joint commissions and committees". The GEF Drin Project is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and executed by GWP and GWP-Med, in cooperation with UNECE.

The GEF Drin Project came at a strategic point, as it provided the vehicle to financially support and facilitate the implementation of the Drin MoU. Aligned in content, aims and objectives with the Drin MoU, the Project contributes

during its implementation to the operationalization of the institutional structure established and enhancing scientific knowledge in the basin as a basis for informed decision-making.

The implementation of the GEF Drin Project 2015-2019 has contributed to a range of constructive developments not the least being the capacity of the countries to implement the EU Water Framework Directive. The development of a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA) along with a Strategic Action Programme (SAP)<sup>9</sup> is expected to strengthen the transboundary cooperation in line with the objective of the Drin MoU.

While overall GEF project implementation is smooth, there are challenges. Hydropower is one specific area of rapid but uncoordinated development may be negative for the sustainability of water ecosystems.

In case the SAP will be approved by the Riparians at a political level it is likely that there will be continued funding from GEF to develop TWRM in the basin.

The Drin Dialogue built on the SEE Regional Dialogue and the CoP established in the region. It demonstrates the strong potential of the approach. While not everything can be transplanted to other basins much can be learned from the process. In the section Methodological Approach general conclusions will be drawn to guide the development of other Regional Dialogues and follow-up in specific Basin Dialogues.

## Community of Practice in SEE and the Drin basin

In SEE the CoP on water management and cooperation has been driven by the Regional and Basin Dialogues. As has been pointed out above CoPs bring together leaders and practitioners who are involved in a sector (section 3.2) and in the SEE case the access to participation was open. The CoP has helped to build and retain expertise at both the individual and organization levels. There are results confirming that collaboration on various levels has improved and cross-fertilization of good practices across countries and organizations can be demonstrated.

As with the SEE Regional Dialogue, the building of the CoP has benefited from the set of key organizations of the initiative as well as a good leadership.

The CoP in SEE has over time matured. In parallel to the theoretical underpinning (section 3.2) referred to above it is characterized by: **The domain** being the shared area of interest is water management and transboundary water cooperation; **The community** with an active sense of belonging and meaningful relationships; **The practice** that has led to achievements in specific basins such as the Drin Basin.

As a result of the Drin Dialogue and continued work in the GEF project a distinct CoP has developed in this basin. Experts and decision makers in Riparians and representatives of international organizations and donors active in the know each other, learn from each other and can benefit from an open dialogue not only limited to various meetings.

The establishment of expert working groups under the Drin MoU has broadened the contact framework and it has become an additional advantage that the specific issues discussed in the various expert working groups (biodiversity, WFD, monitoring) contribute directly to policy development and implementation also on the national level.

The development of the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the on-going GEF Drin project has contributed decisively to the further building of knowledge for the part of the CoP working in that basin.

9 For further explanations on the TDA/SAP process see <https://iwlearn.net/manuals/tda-sap-methodology>.

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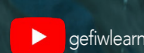
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