



Results overview for the Narew river basin (Poland)

This fact sheet summarises the results of the Water and Wetland Index for the Narew river basin (Poland). Information about the project and the different issues presented in this fact sheet can be found in the WWF Report “Water and Wetland Index - Critical issues in water policy across Europe” (2003).

Water Resources in the Narew river basin

The Narew basin is situated in the northeast part of Poland. With its length (484 km) and the size of its basin (27 000 km²), the Narew river is the fifth largest river in the country. The Narew river basin is an agricultural region, with a low degree of industrialisation and no heavy industry. Its main water problems are the insufficient protection of groundwater resources and the high amount of point source pollution, in particular in the lake district. The Siemianowka reservoir located in the upper reaches of the river poses a serious threat to water quality (blue algae bloom) and alters natural flood pulse dynamics critical for maintenance of wetland ecosystems. Narew was the testing area of a bilateral pilot project (with France) on the implementation of the Water Framework Directive (WFD).



Application of Integrated River Basin Management principles

Public participation in water management

Information provision

In the framework of the WFD pilot project, a temporary basin committee was elected. This body, which included environmental NGOs, water users and administration, identified the main pressures and constraints within the catchment area. The general public was not involved.

Existence of arrangements¹ 😊

Adequacy² 😊

Public consultation

Non-governmental organisations and the public were given opportunities to influence decision-making processes. However, too short consultation periods were an obstacle to their effective participation.

Existence of arrangements 😞

Adequacy 😞

Active involvement

The active involvement of water stakeholders happens only in individual cases, such as the elaboration of the Plan of Water Management in the framework of the Polish-French pilot project.

Existence of arrangements 😞

Adequacy 😞

¹ This assesses the existence of arrangements (e.g. the celebration of information days, the existence of public consultation procedures, the existence of water management plans, etc).

² This assesses the adequacy of the existing arrangements and their implementation on the ground. It is based on the opinion of WWF, partner NGOs and other water stakeholders.

Integrated management of water resources

Transboundary cooperation

There is no cooperation agreement with Belarus, where the source of the Narew river is located.

Existence of arrangements	 
Adequacy	 

Integration of competencies in water management

The Regional Board for Water Management in Warsaw is responsible for most of the water-related issues in the Narew River basin. Some duties (e.g. water licensing) are shared between Board and Voievodsip (local administration) authorities.

Existence of arrangements	
Adequacy	

Integration of water policy with sector policies

A water licence defines the rights and duties of water users. Water licensing is consulted with the Regional Board for Water Management. However, there is no assessment of water needs in the long term.

Existence of arrangements	
Adequacy	

Wetland management

Integration of wetlands into water management

Wetlands are mainly seen as areas to be protected for their biodiversity value, not as an element of key importance in water management.

Existence of arrangements	
Adequacy	

Wetland protection policy

The basin is rich in wetlands of international importance, including two National Parks. The river basin management plan will be oriented towards wetland protection.

Existence of arrangements	
Adequacy	

Wetland restoration policy

The river basin management plan stresses the importance of protection and restoration of wetlands, but it does not identify any specific areas to be restored. In the river basin, there is only a restoration plan for the drained wetlands in the Biebrza valley

Existence of arrangements	
Adequacy	

Response to key pressures and impacts on freshwater ecosystems

Water quality problems (agriculture)

Approach to the problem

The main pollutants are nitrates, phosphates, bacteriological contamination (E.Coli index). Additionally, in the upper course of the river the chlorophyll concentration is high due to the blue-algae bloom in the Siemianowka reservoir. A number of lakes in the Mazury Lake District are quite eutrophic too. No effective measures have been undertaken so far to address these issues.

Adequacy



Legal & regulatory instruments

The new regulations approved in 2001 (Environmental Protection Law and Water Law) are promising legal tools whose effectiveness on the ground can be assessed only in the medium-long term.

Adequacy



Financial & economic instruments

Except for fines for breach of legislation, there are very few financial tools (e.g. subsidies) to promote less polluting practices in agriculture.

Adequacy



Information & voluntary instruments

Information tools such as advice services on best practices or pilot projects aimed at the reduction of water pollution due to agriculture are rarely used.

Adequacy



River fragmentation due to infrastructure

The Narew river was slightly regulated in the mid-70's for flood control and drainage reasons, but most of the floodplains are still active. However the Siemianowka reservoir seriously alters natural flood pulse dynamics. There are 5 weirs on the course of the Narew River, however none of them are equipped with fish ladders. In 2002 a new law on disaster management was enforced and its effectiveness and impact on river conservation can be assessed only in the longer term.

River fragmentation and flood defence



Legend:

Good



Fair



Poor



Very poor





Further information

The WWI for Poland was completed by WWF Poland

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