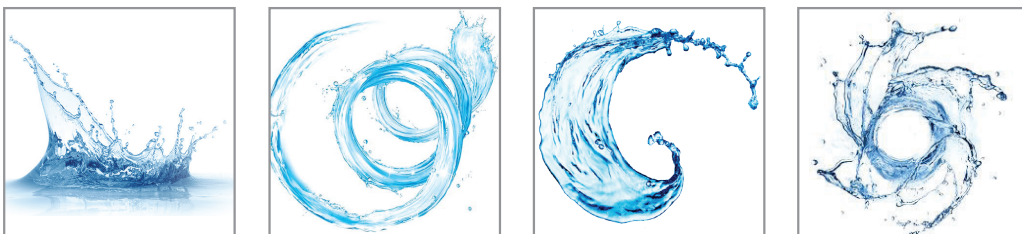


“White paper“

for improvement of water policy practices
in the Republic of Macedonia





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in the Republic of Macedonia

Document: „White Paper for Improved practices in water governance and protection of consumers rights in the R. of Macedonia
within the Project: „Citizens active partner in water policy reforms“

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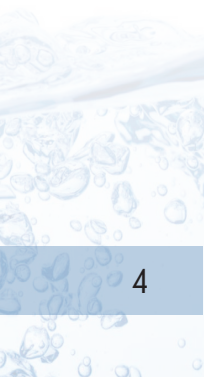
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ABSTRACT

On the road to the EU, one of the biggest challenges of the Republic of Macedonia is the transposition and implementation of the EU environmental legislation requirements, in order to achieve sustainable development and healthy environment.

Generally, implementation of the reforms in the environmental sector is a difficult and long process, which requires great commitment, engagement, continuity, but above all awareness and will for solution of important issues in the field of environment in order to achieve the ultimate goal.

The implementation of reforms in the environment sector should not be viewed only as a process for which implementation financial resources are needed, that is, as a process that produces costs. On the contrary, the whole process should be seen as a long-term investment that in the long run is a significant investment which will pay back for all of us.

Investing in the environment, and therefore in the waters also as an environmental medium, as well as the commitment to address environmental issues, will provide long-term benefits for all of us and future generations, because water resources are a key element in achieving sustainable development of the environment.


All investments directed towards water quality management are crucial for the entire economic and social development of a country, the protection of the environment, as well as for the well-being and survival of the whole living world. Water as an irreplaceable resource is only renewable if it is managed and used in an appropriate manner.

Water as an environmental medium is an area which needs implementation of a number of reforms in accordance with the European Union legislation requirements. Implementation of the reforms in the water sector leads to integrated and sustainable water management. Reforms in the water sector impose a number of commitments, and their implementation requires large financial resources.

Water policy as part of environmental policy is a complicated and complex area that involves and intersects many other sectoral policies (energy, agriculture, economy, etc.) and it's impossible to view its creation and implementation isolated from other policies.

The implementation of reforms in this sector is impossible without identifying all stakeholders and their appropriate active involvement.

The public, that is, the civil sector as stakeholders, play a key role in the reforms implementation. The need to have active and aware civil society organizations, which will actively engage in the overall process of water policy creation and which will continuously and actively follow the whole process, is of great importance for its creation and implementation.



But in order to realize it, it is first necessary to raise awareness of the importance of water as a resource and its importance to the environment. It is the only possible way to understand the need for reforms in the water sector as well as the goal that such reforms should achieve.

Understanding the entire process from the public is particularly important because if understood by the public, it will be a great support and drive of the whole process.

Introduction

The waters as environmental medium are regulated and defined in the planning and strategic documents in the Republic of Macedonia, which establish and define the guidelines for the water policy.

The design and implementation of strategic and planning documents is done by a large number of actors involved in the whole process. The ways of involving and consulting stakeholders are prescribed in national regulations, which define the rights and obligations of all stakeholders involved in the whole process.

The preparation of this document is aimed at finding ways for active and organized involvement of the public and the civil sector in the creation of water policies in the Republic of Macedonia from an organizational aspect.

Namely, this document will enable opening the discussion on the ways of efficient and coordinated action of the civil society sector, which is active in the field of environment in order to achieve greater involvement in all processes of policy creation and implementation.

In this document are offered and reviewed several solutions for establishing the coordination and cooperation of the civil sector among themselves in order to have coordinated, efficient and harmonized participation of the civil sector in the water policies creation. Each of the offered proposals contains concrete directions for active participation of the civil sector in the creation, implementation and monitoring of national and local water management policies.

The need for strengthening the civil sector role in the creation of water policies and continuous monitoring of the reforms is due to the need for continuous monitoring of the central and local government activities, in the area of water.

The civil sector is a controller of the monitoring and application of water policies. The civil sector, as a representative of the public, is in charge of its regular information and advocacy of its interests.

Greater involvement of the civil sector at the same time will contribute to strengthening its own capacities in the area of water management, respectively in raising the level of civil sector knowledge, whose ultimate goal is, of course, the creation of applicable and sustainable policies in water management.

In order to achieve the goal, this document offers several scenarios for strengthening the civil society sector capacities from an organizational aspect, and for active participation in the water policy reform processes, as well as in the design, implementation and monitoring of the country's water policies.

The solutions offered are in accordance with the established structure in the country, and they are in correlation with the existing legal solutions, as well as in terms of fulfilling the Republic of Macedonia obligations on its path to the European Union.

In addition, the document presents the role and the involvement of the national Hydro

Network as an informal network, and as a starting point that would unite all non-governmental sector, specialized organizations in the water sector, that shall enable an organized, coordinated and in a timely manner to take informed attitude and monitoring the guidelines, the implementation processes, as well as implementation of the recommendations noted in this document.

Defining the problem

In the Republic of Macedonia, the framework for action in water management is set up both from a legislative and from an institutional aspect. Opportunities for participation of stakeholders in their creation are defined by the regulations. From a practical point of view, it can be said that to some extent there is a practice for participation of the civil sector in creating them. It should be also emphasized that while in the number of civil society organizations acting the field of environment, in the Republic of Macedonia is large, the number of those specifically involved in the water issues is much lower.

The main problem that can be noticed in terms of participation and involvement of the civil sector in the creation and implementation of water policies is the lack of their organized and coordinated action in the direction of creating water policies, and in implementing the necessary reforms, and all this results in slow and insufficiently identifiable results in the public.

The main reasons that could be noted and cited as a cause of the problem are the following:

- **Low public awareness of the importance of waters as a resource;**

Perhaps as the first reason that could be noticed for the insufficient activity of the civil sector in this area is the insufficient recognition of the significance and the importance of this resource. Namely, it is necessary to work on a greater popularization of the significance of the water as well as to constantly monitor the situation of this resource.

- **The complexity of the area itself;**

The complexity of this area is reflected above all in the involvement of many actors in the implementation of obligations arising from the area of water, because it is currently affecting the implementation of other sectoral policies. Participation in the creation and implementation of the water policy and the implementation of the necessary reforms imposes the need for great expertise due to the complexity of the same.

In addition, expert knowledge of different aspects, knowledge of the EU legislation requirements in order to understand the part of reforms that need to be implemented, as well as great practical experience is needed. In addition to the expertise and knowledge of the area, coordination with other water related policies is needed and necessary. Strengthening the knowledge of different aspects will enable the adoption of comprehensive, optimal and sustainable solutions and politically correct decisions.

- **Insufficient information and interest of the civil sector for the current problems;**

The lack of a central point that would coordinate, and which would be responsible for exchange of information, leads to insufficient information, both within the NGOs themselves on the problems that exist in the territory in which they operate, as well as in relation to the activities that are being undertaken by the civil sector in this field. When talking about a central point it is meant to find a way through which the exchange of information between the non-governmental sector will be done, which will certainly contribute to faster and more organized activity, undertaking actions as well as exchange of experiences.

- **Lack of incentives to solve the problems that exist in the water sector;**

Insufficient knowledge of the area aspects and insufficient expertise to address certain issues results in lack of initiatives to solve the problems.

- **Unorganized and unfocused manner of acting of the civil sector in the water sector;**

Namely, in the Republic of Macedonia there are many civil society organizations that act and are active in the field of environment. These CSOs cover all media and areas of the environment. Yet it must be emphasized that civil society organizations specialized to act in the area of water are missing, respectively organizations whose main interest of their activity will be the water policy, and at the same time taking into account all the various aspects this area regulates and covers, in particular the connection and the representation of this medium in several spheres as a public good and a basic and indispensable component of everyday life.

Most likely, non-existence and lack of action in these areas is a result of the complex nature of the water sector that regulates several aspects, as well as covering several sectors - competent institutions and they are concern of different interests (public, wildlife, agriculture, industry - that is, the business sector), and especially the work of the service providers from which the citizens are concerned the most.

One of the reasons the outcomes can not be recognized in the public may be the lack of an organized and focused manner of acting by the civil society sector is in the area of water. Indeed, it is necessary to establish procedures to coordinate the activities of the sector in order to better manage and solve the problems that exist. This way of acting will enable the creation of a non-governmental sector - a serious partner of the central and local government in solving the problems.

- **Insufficient utilization of the existing mechanisms for public participation in accordance with the existing legislation on water**

The existing national water legislation, as well as environmental legislation, generally offers ways to involve the civil sector and the public in the designing the water policy and participation in decision-making in the area of water. Utilization of such opportunities for public and the civil society sector participation in an appropriate manner requires knowledge about them and their use in an appropriate manner.

The existence of established practices for public participation in decision-making contributes to their improvement and more efficient use, thereby influencing both the quality of adopted decisions on one hand and easier implementation on the other; because there is a consensus and they are also acceptable to the public.

The impression from the current practice of public participation in decision-making and policy-making is that the existing prescribed mechanisms and the established structure in the Republic of Macedonia are not used. The civil sector is a controller that should continuously initiate implementation of such prescribed procedures for participation, as well as their continuous monitoring and to provide proposals for their promotion.

In this respect, it can be concluded that there is insufficient knowledge of the civil sector rights and obligations and the public about the manner of participation in the decision-making in accordance with the possibilities offered by the national legislation on waters, other relevant legislation, as well as lack of knowledge of the available mechanisms for participation in the creation of the water policy.

Solution

Establishing coordinated and organized action of the civil sector in the implementation of water policies will contribute to their more efficient creation and implementation, which will result in their better implementation.

In order to achieve the aforementioned goal, respectively ensuring active participation of the civil sector and the public in drafting of water policies, the preparation of this document was initiated.

The document offers three scenarios for strengthening the civil sector role in water activities. The scenarios are directed towards their better organization, respectively to their directed action and coordination.

In creating the scenarios, the organization and the structure that was established with the national legislation was taken into account while the offered proposals were taken into account in accordance with the existing established structure and water management organization at the central and local level in the Republic of Macedonia.

Selection of a proposal that shall fit into the existing structure will allow a rational utilization of the existing available resources without significant changes. This would provide the fastest and most efficient way of acting within the established framework and practices.

When creating the scenarios, the organization of water management at central and local level has been taken into account. Also, when defining the scenarios, the placement of the consumers' organization has been taken into account, because as organized associations they are important for certain aspects of the water.

The text below provides a description of three scenarios:

First scenario - Strengthening the civil sector representatives' role in the river basin management councils

This scenario proposes strengthening the civil sector representatives' role in the river basin management councils and the river basin districts established in accordance with the Water Law.

Strengthening the civil sector representatives' role would initially involve establishing certain procedures for a more organized approach by the civil sector in the selection of their representatives in the councils for river basin management and in the councils for managing the river basin districts.

In addition, this scenario should consider the possibility of establishing certain written procedures, that is, rules for the civil sector through which the communication and coordination of the civil society organizations with the councils representatives for river basins management in defining the positions and opinions, as well as providing initiatives to address certain issues that are subject to review and decision-making in the councils

Second scenario - regional organization of the civil sector by statistical regions

According to this scenario, the organizing of the civil society sector would take place through the establishment, respectively association of the non-governmental sector, which is active in the area of water, through the establishment of eight regional associations. Establishment of the regional associations shall be carried out in accordance with the eight statistical regions, which exist in the Republic of Macedonia. Representatives from NGOs and citizen consumers associations will be members of regional associations, depending on the region they operate.

The third scenario - a combination of the first two scenarios

This scenario combines the first and second scenarios. It would consist in strengthening the civil sector role in participating in the river basin councils in the manner outlined in the first scenario. Additionally, it is proposed regional organizing of consumer associations by statistical regions. If this scenario is to be realized, ways of coordination and communication of established structure in such a manner, must be foreseen

In all previously mentioned scenarios, coordination and organization would be provided by formation and operation of the National Hydro Network. Its main role in the whole process would be to organize and connect all civil society organizations working in the field of environment with specialty in the field of water.

For this purpose, the text below will provide suggestions for the establishment, operation and organization of the National Hydro Power Network for support and the establishment of the entire process.

Details

Before considering the proposed scenarios, it is necessary to briefly present the established institutional structure existing in the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with the existing legislation for water management in order to be able to recognize and understand the proposed scenarios.

The participation of the non-governmental sector representatives in the established structure for the creation of the water policy is regulated by the existing regulations.

Namely, according to the Law on Water¹, the integrated water management is carried out based on the river basin districts. The territory of the Republic of Macedonia is composed of four river basins, respectively river basin districts of the rivers Vardar, Crn Drim, Strumica and South Morava. The boundaries of the river basin districts are determined by the Decision on determining the boundaries of the river basin districts.²

For each river basin district is prepared a River Basin Management Plan. For the implementation of the river basin management plan for each river basin district, the River Basin Management Councils is established, and in the case of a larger river basin district a River Basins District Council is established. The composition, the manner of participation of the Councils representatives is regulated by the Decree on the composition, the manner of participation, as well as the manner of nomination of the representatives in the councils for management of the river basin districts, and the council for management of parts of the river basin district manner of working³. According to the size of the river basin district, the number of members participating in the work of the Council is defined in the Regulation.

The Decree defines also which stakeholders are involved in the work of the river basin management councils. In the Councils, besides other stakeholders, the participation of representatives of the civil sector is obligatory. Representatives of the civil sector are upon proposal by associations of non-governmental organizations that act in the area of environmental protection and which have their office in the district of a river basin.

In addition to the aforementioned recommendations for river basins management, it should be mentioned that at the central level in accordance with the Law on Water, is foreseen a National Water Council, which is established as an advisory body for waters composed of nine members, appointed by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The Council is responsible to review the water management issues, to harmonize and coordinate different needs and interests, as well as to propose different measures for preservation, protection and continuous improvement of the water regime on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia. The composition of the National Council is determined by the Decision on the establishment of the National Water Council⁴. In the work of the council, participation of a non-governmental organization representative, which acts in the protection of waters, proposed by non-governmental organizations working in the field of water is mandatory. The term of the Council members is three years.

1 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nr. 87/08, 6/09, 161/09, 83/10, 51/11, 44/12, 23/13, 163/13, 180/14, 146/15 and 52/16.

2 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nr.107/12.

3 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nr.106/13.

4 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nr.149/09.

Consumers also play an important role in the creation of water policies. The role of consumers is especially important in the part of water economy services, as well as in determining the prices of water services.

However, in order to adequately ensure their participation and information on the implementation of water policies, it is necessary to adequately integrate them in the whole process of creating and implementing the policies that govern these issues.

The Law on Consumer Protection⁵ defines the structure of the organizations that care about the application of consumer rights. The Law on central level provides for the establishment of a Consumer Council established by the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. The Council is composed of 12 members; out of which one third are from consumer protection associations. The term of the Consumer Council members is four years.

Consumer protection in the municipality is provided through the establishment of a Consumer Protection Council of the Municipality. Consumer Protection Councils in the Municipalities are constituted as permanent working bodies of municipal councils. The Consumer Protection Councils members of the municipalities are selected from the ranks of councilors, consumer associations and other civil associations, public enterprises, chambers of commerce and state inspection bodies that have competencies related to consumer protection.

Consumer Protection Councils propose local biannual consumer protection programs in accordance with the Consumer Protection Program of the Government, which are adopted by municipal councils.

Consumer Protection Councils in the local self-government units have regular contacts and cooperation with the Consumer Protection Council of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia. Each municipality, within its budget, can plan funds to support consumer organizations operating at the local level.

For this purpose, according to the aforementioned Decree, it is stated that besides representatives of the civil associations that act in the field of the environment, the representative of the consumer organization from the municipalities existing in the river basin district participates in the work of the council.

From the above, it can be seen that opportunities for participation and policy making are provided through the existing regulations. What needs to be addressed in the future, especially in the preparation of river basin management plans, as key planning documents based on integrated water management, is to enable appropriate civil sector organization to prepare and implement these documents.

The selection of the most appropriate solution and its establishment, as well as the establishment and maintenance of the National Hydro Network, which will provide a good basis for establishing an organized action of the civil sector, not only for acting in the river basin management councils, but in the wider area also. This will contribute to strengthening the role of river basin management councils as important units in creating water management policy.

Below are the details for the action and organization of CSOs for each scenario separately.

⁵ Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nr 38/04, 77/07, 103/08, 24/11, 164/13, 97/15 and 152/15

Scenario number 1

Strengthening the civil sector representatives' role in the river basin management councils

According to the first scenario, the activities of the civil sector in the creation of water policies would be carried out through the participation of their representatives in already established bodies at the central and local level for water management. The activities and organizing of the civil sector would take place through the elected representatives who participate in the work of the river basin councils.

According to this, the organization is done based on the river basins, not on statistical regions. It can be said that part of this scenario has already been established by the central and local government by establishing the councils for river basin districts management and councils for management of parts of river basins.

What needs to be done and improved with this scenario is to provide a coordinated and organized approach in the selection of council representatives and their harmonized and coordinated action in these bodies. When talking about the civil sector here, besides representatives of non-governmental organizations, active in the field of environment (water), representatives of consumer associations are obliged to nominate representatives in the river basin management councils.

According to this scenario, participation of the NGO sector representatives would take place through participation in the work of:

- National Water Council acting at central level and in which there is a representative of the non-governmental sector;
- River Basin Management Council operating in the district of river basin and the representative/s of the non-governmental sector and consumer associations participate in its work, and the River Basin District Council participate, in which representatives of the non-governmental sector and consumer associations also participate; and
- Consumer Protection Council of the Republic of Macedonia, as well as consumer protection councils in the municipalities.

According to the Decree on the composition, the manner of participation, as well as the manner of nominating the representatives in the councils for of the river basin districts management and the council for management of parts of the river basin district, as well as the manner of operation in the councils for management of the river basin, and the councils for management of parts of river basin , it is foreseen to nominate from one to three representatives on the proposal of associations of non-governmental organizations working in the field of environmental protection, which have their headquarters the area of the river basin. These representatives should be selected at a joint meeting held on the basis of a public call published on the website of the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, with a simple majority.

Representatives of consumer organizations from the municipalities and the City of Skopje participate in the work of the councils, elected at a joint meeting with a simple majority attended by at least two thirds of the nominated persons from the body that manages the consumer organizations from the municipalities and the City of Skopje.

An important issue that needs to be addressed in this scenario is the coordination, organizing, exchange of opinions and building a common position, as well as the selection of the participants in the river basin management council, that is, the council for river basin district management.

The consumer aspect is covered through their own participation in these bodies. In accordance with consumer regulations, they are organized in consumer councils at the level of each municipality. It is mandatory a representative of consumer associations to be nominated in the river basin council. The representative of the associations must coordinate with the councils of consumers established in the municipalities that are part of that river basin. Consumer associations can also be part of the National Hydro Network in which they will address the issues, which are subject of their action.

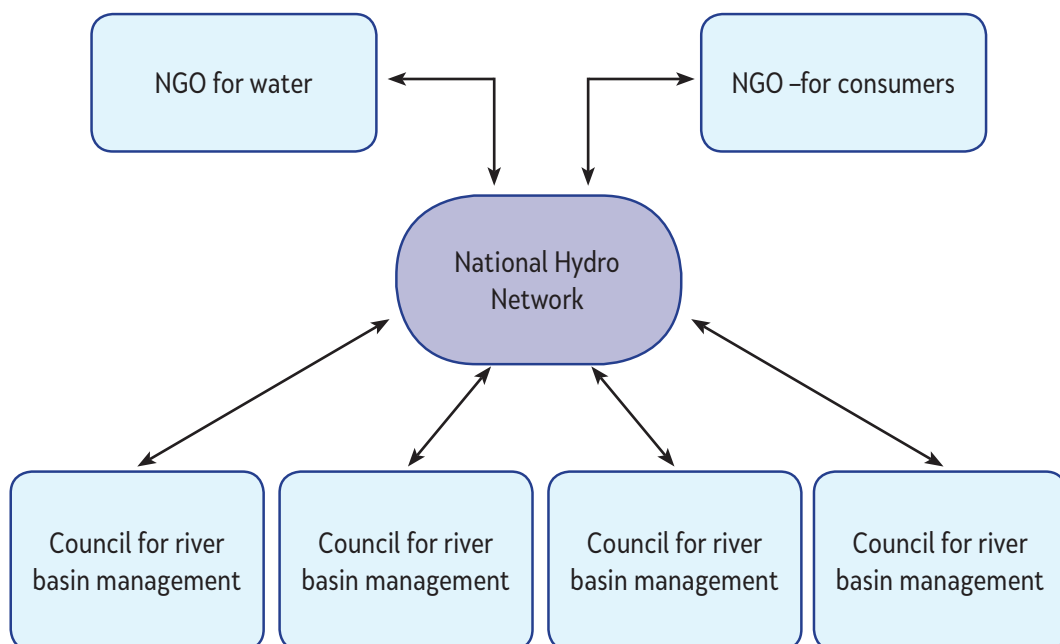
In implementing the first scenario, the National Hydro Network shall have a key role in its establishment, which would enable the connection of all non-governmental organizations as well as consumer associations, working in the area of water.

The non-governmental sector representatives, who participate in the work of the river basin management councils, and who are authorized to represent the interests of the non-governmental sector through the National Hydro Network, shall coordinate their views regarding the participation in the meetings as well as inform other non-governmental organizations for the decisions taken at the council sessions. It is mandatory consumer associations, as part of the National Hydro Network, to be informed and consulted on important issues for them.

To this end, the National Hydro Network will need to develop rules and procedures for coordinating and organizing the activities that will take place within the National Hydro Network.

The network will coordinate the positions on certain important issues in the area of water management.

Schematic presentation of the first scenario



Scenario number 2

Regional organization of the civil sector by statistical regions

According to the second scenario, the organizing of the non-governmental sector shall be done according to the regional approach, in accordance with the existing statistical regions. Namely, eight regional associations shall be formed, one for each region⁶.

Regional associations would consist of one representative of environmental associations, respectively in the field of water, and that are active on the territory of that region. Representatives of consumer associations would also be members of regional associations.

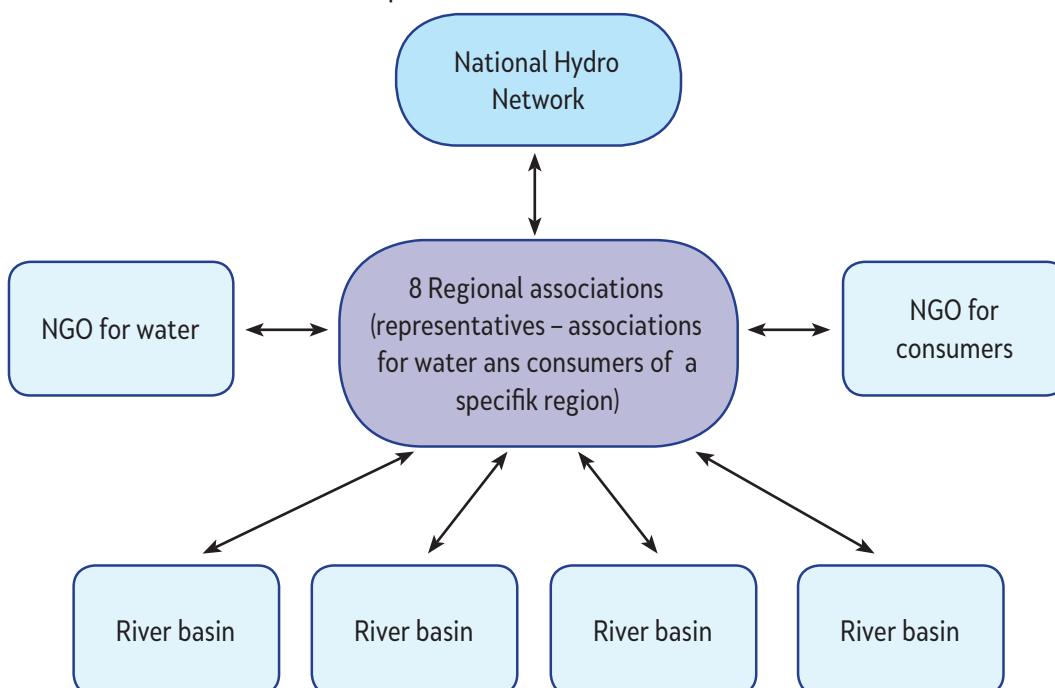
Subject of action of these regional associations would be issues of regional character, as well as all important issues at national level related to the waters.

This approach is much more suitable for the current consumers' organization, because it would enable the consumer associations, which are organized at the municipal level, to organize in regional level. However, this scenario will be more difficult to organize in terms of water because river basins are not organized according to the regional approach.

This approach would make it difficult to monitor the activities in the area of water policies. Activities that take place in a river basin should be monitored by several regional associations and thus coordinate their activities.

Certainly in this approach, coordination, organizing, exchange of opinions and building a common attitude of the participants would take place through the National Hydro Network.

Schematic presentation of the second scenario



⁶ There are eight statistical regions in the Republic of Macedonia including: The Skopje, Vardar, Pelagonia, Polog, South-West, East, North-East and South-East region

Scenario number 3

Strengthening the civil sector role in the councils for river basin management and organizing regional associations to solve water issues..

The third scenario is a combined approach of the previous two scenarios, that is, participation of civil society organizations in the area of water to be done on a river basin approach, while in terms of consumers, to accept the regional approach.

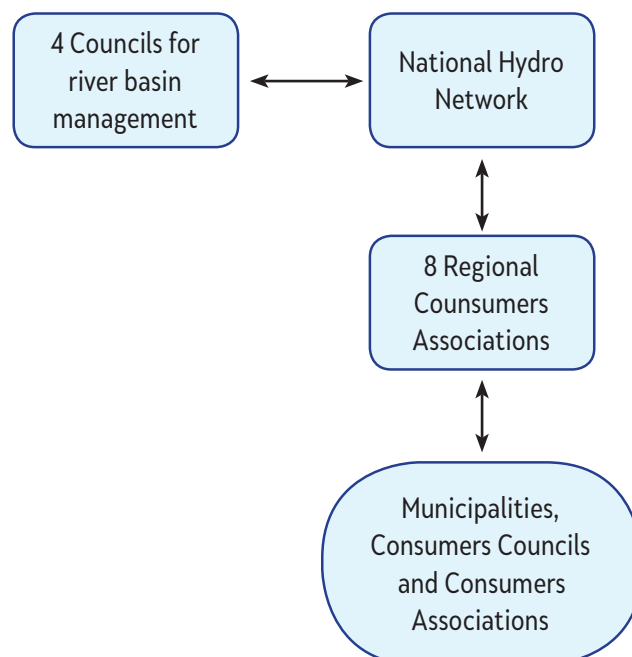
Pursuant to the Law on Consumer Protection, within each municipality, is envisaged the formation of consumer councils at the municipal level as permanent working bodies, in which representatives of consumer associations participate. Members of the municipal Consumer Protection Councils are selected from the ranks of councilors, consumer associations and other civil associations, public enterprises, chambers of commerce and state inspection bodies that have responsibilities related to consumer protection.

The organization of the consumers can be done according to the regional approach in accordance with the statistical regions, which would enable the consolidation, respectively organization of regional consumer councils in which representatives from each municipality in a particular region will participate. This approach in terms of organizing of consumers is acceptable because part of the councils in some municipalities have not been formed yet.

The regional approach will allow for greater monitoring of issues of interest to consumers, as well as uniformed practices per region and on national level. These regional councils would suggest consumer associations' members in the river basin management councils.

The exchange of information would be carried out through the National Hydro Network.

Schematic presentation of the second scenario



The role of the National Hydro Network in the implementation of the above scenarios

The support in the implementation of all scenarios will be provided by the National Hydro Network.

It should initially be formed and managed by non-governmental organizations working in the area of water, which are specialized in conducting water issues. Also, in this network it is necessary to include organizations working to protect the consumers' rights.

It should first identify all active organizations and associations and then enable their networking on contractual basis. Communication of all its members should be carried out through the network, and it should regularly coordinate all activities. The entire communication of cooperation with the river basins representatives and the national council for waters would be realized through the Network.

The network would also be the main contact point/body, which would then distribute all data and information to other associations and organizations.

Co-operation with the National Hydro Network would be realized through selected representatives in river basins, who will exchange and coordinate their views through regional consumer councils.

The cooperation, respectively the coordination of activities at the central level and the activities in river basins for issues of importance for the water sector would be realized through the National Hydro Network.

Benefit

The establishment of any of these three scenarios will mean progress in the civil society sector organization and action. Establishing an organized way of action will contribute to a more serious, more significant and synergetic approach to the protection and use of waters as a resource.

The organized manner will enable a joint coordinated approach by the civil sector to the central and local government institutions during the creation of policies and their implementation, and in particular in monitoring the implementation of those policies.

Continuous and specialized monitoring of a particular area, the water policy in the concrete case, enables constant presence and monitoring of the activities related to water. This directed and continuous action contributes to strengthening the civil sector capacities, that is, specialization of certain civil sector personnel in the field of water activities.

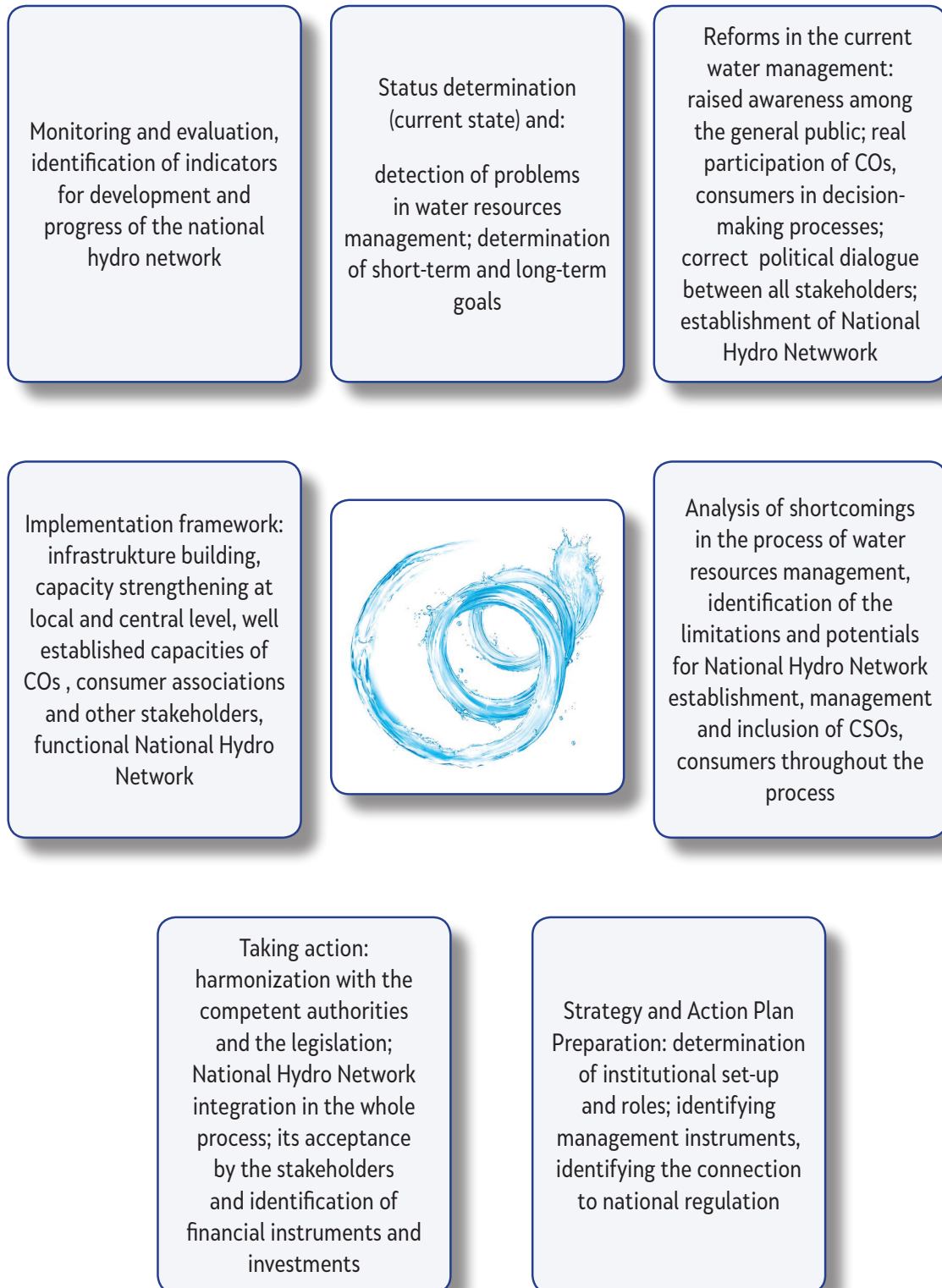
This will certainly have a positive impact on raising the public awareness of the importance of water as a resource, which in turn will enable raising awareness of the importance of this resource and its protection. Increased awareness of the importance of waters will positively affect the need for reform and understanding of them, which in some way will influence to increase the pressure for their faster realization. It will also provide for its greater protection

The coordinated and strengthened action of the civil sector will enable it to be an equal partner with the central and local government and the business sector in policy-making. Such coordinated approach provides for significant contribution and assistance to the central and local government institutions in the creation and implementation of policies, and hence to increase the quality of the policies and at the same time to increase the quality services offered by the service providers.

Making decisions and planning requires an integrated approach of CSOs and consumer associations' participation, as well as in the establishment of the National Hydro Network. This approach will enable active, organized and coordinated participation in water resources management, which aims that: water management takes into account the different needs (uses) and different aspects of the water sector, as well as the needs of all involved participants in the water management in this Network. The planning process, as well as strategies, should incorporate social, economic, and environmental goals.

The establishment of the National Hydro Network should follow the integrated water management model presented below:

Model for integrated water management



Resume

The preparation of this document is a positive step forward in the overall process and it opens the opportunity to discuss the proposed scenarios. Particularly important is the fact that establishing an organized activity is being considered.

Selection of any of the offered scenarios will mean a step forward in the whole process, and will only demonstrate the civil sector willingness to undertake activities that can result with positive outcome only.

The selection and realization of one of the offered scenarios is certainly a process that requires wide consultation and debate between the non-governmental sector and other stakeholders, consideration of the positive benefits from it, as well as consideration of the possibilities for their realization.

Starting the activities for organizing the non-governmental sector is an indicator of increased awareness and understanding of the ongoing processes that are taking place in the country, as well as willingness to support them so that sustainable policies, which will be supported by all interested parties are created.

The continuous monitoring of the implementation of policies and reforms in the sector leads to an organized and coordinated manner, will positively impact to increase the responsibility of the central and local government for their implementation.

Such processes will enable greater information of the public about all happenings, as well as confidence in the processes through constant informing of the public and consultation on issues of their interest.

Call for action

Regardless which of the offered scenarios in this document will be accepted, what should be a priority activity in the future period is to first establish the National Hydro Network, which would initially be composed of civil society organizations that will create preconditions for the realization of the offered scenarios.

After its creation and establishment, it can later expand its activities in relation to other relevant stakeholders involved in the implementation of water policies (economic sector, fishing associations, farmers, etc.).

Namely, it is necessary to first identify civil society organizations working in the field of the environment, which are specialize in the field of water. Parallely to identify active associations of consumers, which are interested to act in this field.

It is then necessary to start grouping them on several grounds, that is, by the territory of their activity, the municipality and to region they belong to, as well as to determine the district of the river basin they belong to, in terms to their activities.

The next step would be their networking, respectively establishment of an informal network of identified civil society organizations and establishment of the National Hydro Network that will unite all associations, which will show interest to participate in its work.

It is also necessary to establish an organizational structure and rules of work that would define the areas of action.

It is particularly important to decide which activities would be covered by this network. Main activities of the network would be to monitor all activities in the area of creating, implementing and monitoring the water policy and exchange of proper information that would consist of:

- nominating members of the National Council and the River Basin Councils and all other bodies that will require participation in activities related to water management;

This activity needs to be elaborated and the manner of members' nomination and selection should be decided. The principle of rotation should maybe taken into consideration. But at this moment it is still at an initial phase, in which solutions can not be offered, since the creation of these councils will require the information on the number of associations, as well as the capacities of the non-governmental sector. Regarding this, it is necessary to set up rules for representatives' nomination and even to consider the criteria these representatives should meet, in order to objectively and professionally represent the interests they are elected for. These would be internal rules that would be established, since the legislation does not prescribe strict criteria for participation, but leaves it to the NGO sector to organize.

- active participation of the elected members in the bodies;

Certain rules for the participation of the members in the work of the bodies are prescribed in the Decree on the composition, the manner of participation, as well as the manner of nomination of the representatives of councils for the river basin districts management and the councils for management of parts of the river basin districts, and the way of operation. However the aspect of their obligations towards the civil sector and their way of acting, it is necessary to be regulated by the non-governmental sector itself. This would allow for a more serious approach to the selected members, as well as increase their accountability in order to more efficiently and conscientiously perform the assigned obligation.

- conduct consultations and taking positions on certain issues important for the area of water;
- to review **planning documents and to provide opinions related to the area of water.**

Establishing consultation as well as the obligation to inform on all issues is important for establishing a practice for more transparent operation. Since mutual communication and information within the non-governmental sector will contribute to better results as well as to increasing the quality of the decisions that associations bring.

- **to provide suggestions and initiatives;**

The activities of the non-governmental sector cannot be reduced only to monitoring of what is planned, but requires its active approach, respectively providing different initiatives and offering solutions to specific problems.

- holding regular meetings and consultations;

Within this established structure, internal rules to precisely define the ways of consultation and holding meetings must be proposed.

- **maintenance of the National Hydro Network;**

Providing technical, financial and administrative capacities in order to establish and maintain the National Network is a key issue for implementation of the planned activities.

References

- Law on Water („Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“nr. 87/08, 6/09, 161/09, 83/10, 51/11, 44/12, 23/13, 163/13, 180/14, 146/15 and 52/16);
- Law on Consumer Protection („Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ nr.. 38/04, 77/07, 103/08, 24/11, 164/13, 97/15 and 152/15);
- The Decision to determine boundaries of the river basin districts (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ nr. 107/12);
- The Decree on the composition, manner of participation, as well as manner of nomination of the representatives in the councils for river basin districts management and the council for management of parts of the river basin district, as well as the manner of operation (“Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“ nr.106/13);
- Decision for establishment of the National Water Council („Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia“nr.149/09).
- Ministry of Economy www.economy.gov.mk
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning www.moepp.gov.mk
- Consumers Organization of Macedonia www.opm.org.mk

Organizations that signed a memorandum of cooperation and participation
in the National Hydro Network

	Title of the Organization	City	Represented by
1	Consumers Organization of Republic of Macedonia	Skopje	Marijana Loncar Velkova
2	Center for environmental Ddemocracy Florozon,	Skopje	Kiril Ristovski
3	Association for Agroecology and Sustainable Development Agri On	Negotino	Despina Popovska
4	Training for sustainable development ORT	Skopje	Biljana Stevanovska
5	Association for international youth cooperation INTERAKTIV	Bitola	Martin Nikolovski
6	Citizens Association for environment protection Ekozvon,	Skopje	Slagjana T. Stamenkova
7	Association Civil centre for sustainable development EGRI,	Kriva Palanka	Andriana Ivanovska Davitkovska
8	Association for Prospective Integration and Development Roma Perspective	Prilep	Bedrije Ajdini
9	Consumers Organization, Bitola	Bitola	Snezana Dimitrovska
10	Center for Local Development CELOR	Radovis	Stole Georgiev
11	Citizens Association Ekovita	Negotino	Sasko Todorov
12	Association for sustainable development SFERA	Bitola	Milco Duli
13	Association for Economic Policy Research and Analysis Kvantum Prima	Kavadarci	Blagoj Gelevski



