



Photo: Manca Meglar, IzVRS



From planning to implementation Recommendations for actions supporting adaptation in the Vipava River Basin

Key messages

- An open consultation, targeted interviews and smaller meetings between local stakeholders and decision-makers as well as external scientists have informed the design of the Vipava River Basin Adaptation Plan.
- Risk of drought, flood risk and water quality are the main issues identified by stakeholders as challenging the basin.
- Five water management measures are particularly promising for direct uptake due to low implementation and operational costs.
- The Vipava River Basin Adaptation Plan can act as a dynamic document in which more information on the planning process and its outcomes can be retrieved.

Introduction

To ensure that adaptation strategies for water management are credible, informed and achievable, they need to be developed in an open and transparent process with the active participation of a diversity of stakeholders, sectors and policy areas in the river basin. In this context, the Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia has led a collaborative process of developing the River Basin Adaptation Plan together with the basin's stakeholders. The plan includes 20 measures for adaptation addressing three challenges, a suggested timeline for implementation, and an indication of which measures should be prioritised given stakeholder preferences and the local context.

1 Presentation of priority measures

Priority amongst the 20 water management measures has been assessed according to stakeholders' preferences, implementation-oriented factors such as multi-criteria analysis, the implementation of options regarding the challenges, feasibility, acceptability, and policy synergies. On this basis, five measures were assigned the highest priority for implementation. These adopt a soft approach to adaptation, were amongst stakeholders, have low implementation and operational costs, and exhibit the highest performance in the impact assessment for the identified challenges of Vipava river basin. The priority measures include:

- a. *Establishment of an inter-municipal expert working group,*
- b. *An awareness campaign for the local public,*
- c. *Construction of water reservoirs,*
- d. *An awareness campaign for water management experts, and*
- e. *Improving the financing system for water infrastructure.*

These measures respond to three topics where adaptation needs to anchor and that guide the following text: I.) Policy and legislation (measures a and e) II.) Awareness (measures b and d) and III.) Technical measures (measure c).

I. Policy and legislation

Establishment of an inter-municipal expert working group addresses all three challenges that the river basin is facing. The measure presents a path to a more coherent spatial development in the Vipava river basin, showing many co-benefits with other measures. The lacking jurisdiction of municipalities for certain issues with regards to water management and agriculture might pose a barrier to the working groups, as it might limit its actions to the frame of the strategical plans of these sectors. Nevertheless, this measure is crucial for direct implementation. Due to the activities within the BeWater project, the Council for the Vipava River was established and a project team for the "Revitalization of the Vipava River" was created in the end of 2015. These organized groups are a starting ground for establishment of an inter-municipal expert working group which needs political legitimisation.

The improvement of the financing system for water infrastructure aims to renovate the current eligibility criteria for the national Water Fund dedicated to financing of water infrastructure. The Water Fund should take into account the objectives set out in the River Basin Management Plans and include in its eligibility criteria aspects to finance measures outlined in the plan in order to contribute to achieve the goal of the Water Framework Directive. With strengthening water management objectives through investments of the Water Fund, water infrastructure can be designed according to sustainable water management aims fostering flood prevention. Overall, the measure will contribute to reducing flood risk and associated damages to different sectors, improving water availability during droughts in the growing season and thus reducing associated damages.

II. Awareness

Several awareness campaigns should be carried out on local but also national level in order to build social capital needed for river basin adaptation planning.

The awareness campaign for local public aims to increase the understanding on the impacts of chemical, biological and hydromorphological pressures on water resources caused by the public. The campaign should amongst other explain the effects of legal and illegal water abstraction and

storage of water, manipulation of the riverbed, introduction of non-native species and the pollution with various sources. The awareness campaign for water management experts aims to enhance awareness of experts for more sustainable techniques when designing interventions on water bodies. The campaign will also increase the awareness of experts on the impacts of the effects of hydromorphological pressures.

The measures are a precondition for the shift from a science-based, technical approach to water management towards a more integrative view as promoted by the Water Framework Directive.

III. Technical measures

Construction of water reservoirs aims to provide water during droughts: 1) for irrigation of agricultural land and thus avoiding agricultural drought and 2) for maintaining environmental flow conditions downstream during low flow conditions, thus avoiding hydrological drought. During short but heavy rainfall, water reservoirs would minimize floods downstream by retaining peak flows. Although the measure achieves a high impact when coping with droughts and reducing flood risks, due to its technical nature it is involved with high implementation costs and might pose conflicts to other measures and objectives of the Water Framework Directive. The measure was strongly supported by the participating stakeholders.



2 Concluding recommendations for future action in the river basin

The presentation of measures in this policy brief is an excerpt of the Vipava River Basin Adaptation Plan, which aims to inform decision makers about possible measures that could be included in other planning activities such as the River Basin Management Plans, Flood Risk Management Plans or project activities. The proposed measures and priorities within the adaptation plan are derived from the participative bottom up approach. Therefore, they have the necessary support from stakeholders involved with the topic.

The outlined measures in the Vipava River Basin Adaptation Plan provide the opportunity to use the individual measures as a basis for planning via the existing implementation pathways of sectoral programmes. Some measures already show synergies or are similar with measures of existing sectoral plans and can therefore be a useful addition. Measures that are already fully or partially included in other sectoral plans can now get additional support also from Vipava RBAP.

Besides obligatory policy implementation processes, several financial mechanisms such as LIFE, Cohesion funds, Rural development funds provide an opportunity for follow-up projects with the aim to implement the measures and to contribute to achieving sustainable and adaptive water management. The Institute for Water of the Republic of Slovenia, as the key expert of the planning process, is interested in supporting future activities and will be available for questions and consultation relating to river basin adaptation actions. As a follow up to the participatory planning process, a LIFE project already received funding to continue the work.



Photo: Manca Maglar, IZVRS

This policy brief was written by Peter Suhadolnik. Opinions expressed are those of the author only and do not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement No. 612385