

**Republic of Croatia**

**INNOVATIVE PRACTICES PERTAINING TO WATER-RELATED  
ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES IN REPUBLIC OF CROATIA**

**Prepared by**

**Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction**

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In the past years the international community agreed on the objectives aimed at protecting both water resources and public health. Our common targets to ensure the sustainability aims include our efforts in developing preventive action and concrete response. Thus the many small steps taken by each country or accomplished by other subject in this sphere could, when totalled, represent a significant step towards the interest of a sustainable future.

**Description of Initiative**

Croatia is endowed with relatively abundant water resources and characterized by great rivers and the karst coastal area. Water resources differ by their size and their distribution in time and space. Water management includes a number of activities, measures and decisions aimed at maintaining, improving and ensuring unity of the water regime in a specific area. Water regime is determined by essential water management principles and water management plans.

At present 86% of public water supply comes from renewable groundwater resources and only 14% from surface waters. For the purpose of protecting groundwater against pollution, the sanitary zones of water-well protection have been defined. The past system for the protection of drinking water turned out to be uneconomical, therefore a new regulation and

accompanying guidelines for the definition of zones with sanitary protection of drinking water are in process of preparation.

In that regard, all stakeholders responsible for water management, and water protection in Croatia are included in the process of approaching the main goals to respond to the specific target of water on the basis of several important documents: such as National Environmental Strategy and National Environmental Action Plan, Assessment and survey of the state and efficiency of water protection measures undertaken in the territory of Croatia, Water balancing in Croatia ect. A national integrated water resources management plan is under preparation.

Participating organizations are: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management of the Republic of Croatia, Ministry for Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction, Croatian Water Company, water joint-stock companies, counties, communities and cities and private sector.

Our initiative is aimed at working out a flexible strategic approach that will help us to meet Croatian commitments towards EU standards concerning the EU Water Framework Directive (WFD).

The status of Croatia as a candidate country to European Union membership strongly influences the processes leading towards sustainable development.

Water protection control is one of the most important activities in the water sector. In this regard, when planning water protection one of the fundamental objectives is preservation of waters that are still clean, i.e. water springs, upper river courses especially in mountain regions and groundwater as the only real water supply reserve.

Taking into account that the quality of water is related to health issues, in Croatia a systematic programme for monitoring the quality of surface waters and ground waters is conducted by 20 authorized laboratories, including the Main Water Laboratory of Croatian Waters at 454 measuring stations. The surface water quality monitoring programme was prepared in accordance with the needs on the national level and with international obligations. Despite a comparatively well-distributed measuring network the existing monitoring should be improved.

## **Examples**

In co-operation with the international community many important water protection projects have been prepared or are in the process of preparation. It is important to underline following projects: The Danube Basin Pollution Abatement Programme prepared with all countries of the Danube basin and founded by UNDP through the UNEP/GEF; The Project of Eco-Kaštela Bay that includes the construction of a sewage system between several towns on the Adriatic coast with a treatment plant founded by the loan of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and cofinanced by World Bank; elaboration of the Study of Abatement of Water Pollution in the Sava Basin performed by Japanese Co-operation Agency.

### **Mainstreaming / Sustainability**

According to existing documents the main aim is to address targets related to water and sanitations, and water and health aspects due to the focus on sustainable support and the focus on improving the situation, capacity building and network building.

Improving the construction of necessary central industrial wastewater treatment plants, introducing replacement technologies, creating harmonies and constant development in which the uneconomical use of spatial resources will not cause deterioration of water quality and thus seriously damage the human health and ecosystems.

### **Replicating the Initiative**

This ensures involvement of all stakeholders i. e. the state, public and private sectors, and provides concrete and action-oriented plans that are prepared to meet needs in the local environment. This also requires organization by local authorities (municipalities, towns) and cooperation with regional (counties) and national authorities.

To address the problem concerning water protection on subregional level it is crucial to adopt a balanced and concrete approach for effective implementation of common goals.