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Romania : A basin committee for the Siret river 1999 - 2000

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In Romania, water management is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Water, Forestry and the Environment, General Directorate for Water, which entrusted its execution at the national level to an organisation which became the National Apule Romane Company (NARC) in 1999.

Management has been executed at the river basin level for a long time. Indeed, the water law passed in 1996 aimed to develop solidarity and users' participation by creating Basin Committees and a National Water Fund.

In order to assist with the implementation of such a reform, a project (namely "Creation of a Basin Committee for a Concerted Management of Water Resources") was proposed by IOWater and NARC in 1997 to the European Commission's PHARE-Partnership programme and to the French Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The choice of the pilot basin was confirmed : it was to be the Siret river basin, (30,000 km², population of about 3 million inhabitants) which suffers from pollution by domestic and industrial discharges, water shortage, erosion and clogging of reservoirs and flash floods.

The project included the following phases :

- Assistance with the setting-up of the General Secretariat and Basin Committee for the pilot basin, including the definition of the secretariat's tasks, the procedure for the making of a committee, representative of the water problems encountered in the basin, the organisation of meetings, the establishment of internal rules and a work programme, etc.

- The organisation of a study tour in France for the members of the General Secretariat and Basin Committee of the pilot river basin. This trip aimed at presenting the French approach to concerted water resource management at the level of a basin, the operating methods used by basin organisations and having the group meet French counterparts and exchange experiences.

- The updating of the water development and management scheme for the pilot basin and the preparation of a summary document to be submitted to the Basin Committee for examination and advice on general orientations and financing priorities. A procedure for consulting the public was also established.

- An analysis of the existing tariff and tax system regarding the various water uses, proposals for the development of the user-pays and polluter-pays principles, supply of a software for the simulation of the financial balance at the level of a basin (charges and taxes).

- Assistance with training needs assessment : presentation of a method for assessing the needs of the different utilities and formulation of a training plan. Identification of local training resources.

- Purchase of computerised and documentary equipment to enable access to updated information and the implementation of tools for disseminating information.

- A national workshop for an introduction to the experience acquired about the pilot basin. This workshop gathered about 150 participants coming from the 11 basin directorates and Ministries concerned, ...

The project started in February 1999, after the signing of the contract with the European Commission.

In addition to IOWater specialists, an expert from the Rhine-Meuse Water Agency and Pre-Accession Adviser for the twinning between the French and Romanian Ministries in charge of the environment, also participated in the project implementation.

The BASIN COMMITTEE members, together with the secretariat and the NARC project team undertook a study tour

in France in October 1999, part of which took place in Paris with meetings with executives from the Ministry of the Environment and IOWater, and part in Metz where they were welcomed by the Rhine-Meuse Water Agency which organised interviews with members of its Board of Directors and Basin Committee.

During the project implementation, three official meetings of the Basin Committee took place :

- ▶ The first meeting in December 1999 : election of the President and Vice President, approval of internal rules, first evaluation of the development scheme, establishment of the procedure and agenda for public consultation.
- ▶ The 2nd at the end of January 2000 : drawing up of a list of priority work to be carried out in the Siret basin in 2000 for submission to the Ministry of the Environment and its taking into account in budget planning.
- ▶ The 3rd in April 2000 to present the results of the public consultation, the first conclusions of the assessment of financial mechanisms, preparation of the Basin Committee advice on the Framework Scheme, preparation of the national workshop and contributions to be planned to share experience.