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Turkey : European twinning on the implementation of the Nitrates Directive

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Concerned with the mitigation of the impact of agricultural pollution on water resources, Turkey signed with the European Union a twinning agreement on the implementation of the Nitrates Directive.

This twinning associates Austria, the Netherlands, Great Britain and France, through the International Office for Water. In Turkey, the main recipient is the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the Ministry for the Environment being also associated to the work.

Started in April 2009, this twinning was completed at the end of 2009. Each of the four Member Countries of the European Union was led to present the way used for dealing with this Directive during the Nineties, regarding the delimitation of vulnerable zones and the development of successive Action Plans.

France acts differently by delimiting the areas with proven pollution problems or with the risk of eutrophication and by organizing at the same time Action Plans in the basins, with strong implication of the Water Agencies, and in the Departments to respond to specific local problems. It is clear that the implementation of the Nitrates Directive in Turkey requires better knowledge of the farmers' practices and a broad awareness campaign for the farmers on the problem of agricultural pollution.

To meet the requests of Turkey, IOWater translated into English the Code of agricultural practices as well as a sample of departmental action plan. Beyond the many elements provided during six successive workshops, these documents are a practical working basis for Turkey, the idea being to take the overall framework as a starting point.

The Turkish civil servants also showed a keen interest on the French institutional water organization and on the institutions involved in the implementation of the Nitrates Directive such as the National Agency for Water and Aquatic Environments - "ONEMA", the Water Agencies, the inspectorates of classified installations and water policing or the role of the French Committee for Agricultural Pollution Control - "CORPEN".

The following problems were also approached :

- The link with the WFD, the Drinking Water Directive and Urban Waste Water ;
- Irrigation management using the French example.

One of the first problems which the authorities will have to face is the uncontrolled dumping of manure at the roadside or in ditches. This is a widespread practice in Turkey, manure being seldom used as fertilizer by the farmers. A great effort will have to be made so that the stock breeding farms of very small size invest in installations for the storage of manure and liquid effluents.

The development of a water quality monitoring network should also be tackled with.

This Twinning should be followed by a technical assistance program - not decided to date - for the practical implementation of the Directive.