European Freshwater Ecosystem Assessment

Cross-walk between the Water Framework Directive and Habitats Directive types, status and pressures

Publication

Report

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This report explores the possibility of linking Water Framework Directive (WFD) and Habitats Directive (HD) information by using WISE WFD information on types, ecological status, pressures and measures (EEA, 2012) and HD infor-mation on habitat types, conservation status and threats (EC, 2007). Among the authors are Ecologic Institute's Eleftheria Kampa and Ulf Stein. The report is available for download.

The findings may be used as input to the EEA Freshwater Ecosystem Assessment in 2015, and also for future European assessments of specific objectives, status and trends for various types of rivers and lakes after the reporting of the WFD 2nd RBMPs and the next HD article 17 reporting. The report also provides a basis for discussions of the potential and limitations for WFD and HD synergies in terms of monitoring programmes, assessment systems and measures to improve status.

Many national WFD types have high similarity and may be aggregated into 20 broad river types and 15 broad lake types based on altitude, size and geology (and mean depth for lakes). There is a reasonable match between these WFD broad types, the WFD Intercalibration common types and the HD freshwater habitat types, as well as EUNIS types for both rivers and lakes, with the exception of two very wide HD river habitats, the HD type 3260 rivers from plain to montane levels, and 3210 Fennoscandian rivers, as well as some very narrow HD and EUNIS types.

The WFD ecological status of rivers and lakes aggregated to broad types is best for water bodies in highland or mid-altitude areas with siliceous geology and worst for small water bodies in lowland areas with calcareous geology, which is consistent with the different pressure intensities. The large and deep lakes are mostly in good ecological status, while the large rivers are mostly in moderate or worse status.

The differences between WFD ecological status and pressures of rivers and lakes aggregated into the HD biogeographic regions show that water bodies in the Alpine and Boreal areas of Europe are in better status and have less pressures than those in other parts of Europe. Ecological status is better in water bodies associated with Natura 2000 sites than for all water bodies, both for rivers and for lakes.

Assessments of freshwater status and pressures reported under the WFD are mostly

consistent with assessments of conservation status and threats reported under the Habitats Directive for WFD types that are comparable to HD freshwater habitats. Inconsistencies and mismatches are due to non-comparable types/habitats and/or to non-comparable assessment systems.

Multiple benefit measures for water management and nature protection are presented, such as removal of fish migration barriers and restoration of floodplains and riparian zones to restore habitats and enhance biodiversity, improve retention of water and reduce pollution pressures on rivers and downstream lakes and coastal waters.

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