Session B1: German Participatory Forum on Fish Protection and Downstream Migration

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German participatory forum on fish protection and downstream migration

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Key question

• Can a national stakeholder dialogue process improve the conditions for the implementation of measures on fish protection and downstream migration?
Content of presentation

1. Motivation for founding a Forum on fish protection and downstream migration
2. Objectives of Forum
3. Operational mode
4. Key messages and lessons learned
Context & Motivation

• **Continuity disrupted** every 2 km in Germany (7,700 HP; 200,000 transverse structures)

• **Policy requirements** put pressure on stakeholders to act
  • WFD requires ecological good status at the latest by 2027
  • German Water Management Act (§35): HP authorised, if appropriate measures to protect fish populations are taken

• **Fish protection & downstream migration: Intensive & controversial issue**
  • Low acceptance of measures (only 10% of WFD continuity measures completed by 2012)
  • Conflicts of interest (economic interests, different values)
  • Technical, political & interest-motivated arguments mixed
Purpose & objectives of Forum

- Forum on Fish Protection and Downstream Migration founded in 2012, http://forum-fischschutz.de/
  - Exchange information and experiences across groups with different interests throughout Germany
  - Promote acceptance and implementation of measures
  - Distinguish between political, interest-based problems and facts on technical issues and research needs

Where are there differences of opinion?
Which are the key research needs?
Which are the key needs for action?
Can there be agreement on state-of-art methods/technologies?
Participants

- Ca. 200 active participants, and in total ca. 500 followers across sectors

- River basin and fisheries authorities of the federal states
- National river basin, nature conservation and waterway administration
- Energy sector
- Civil engineering consultancies
- Environmental consultancies
- Nature and angler associations
- Research institutes/universities
Core topics defined by the Forum

- Online poll at start of Forum to define topics for discussion at workshops
- Favoured wide range of topics:
  - Environmental **policy & legal** background
  - **Goals** for fish protection and downstream migration
  - **Behavioral & population biology** basic principles for fish protection and downstream migration
  - **Strategic planning instruments** for hydropower use and river basin management
  - Potential for **fish damage**
  - **Technical measures** for fish protection and downstream migration
  - **Functional control of measures and monitoring** for fish protection & downstream migration
Output of the Forum

• Record of consensual points and different positions
• Common nationwide understanding on key challenges and possible solutions, main needs for action and research

Results papers

Synthesis report

• Engagement of experts in developing a **manual for site specific evaluation of efficiency** of fish protection and bypass systems
Some key messages

**Agreement on current state of the art;** extensive knowledge and technical solutions are already available; manual on site-specific evaluation of efficiency

**Existing standards** for fish protection **should be implemented** even without absolute certainty on efficiency of measures (taking proportionality into account)

**Lay down clear rules** on how to proceed if measures do not reach objectives, despite state-of-art

Provide funding, private investments, publicly available results

**Lack of knowledge** on technical implementation (large water bodies), behavioural & population biology

**Conflicting issues,** e.g. protection of individuum vs population, protection of fish vs. habitat
Lessons learned on the process

Participation principles*

• **Openness**

• **Transparency** and regular feedback

• **Protection of core values** & balancing interests of various stakeholders

• Include all key stakeholders from start

• **Clarity on purpose of participation** (roadmap, outcome of process)

*source: EU project HarmoniCOP

Forum approach

• Open and unbiased discussion; neutral moderation; topics set by Forum

• Events well prepared; no urge to form consensus, all views heard

• Workshop results sent for approval of content; respect for different positions

• High interest in Forum events; able to reach the key actors

• No pressure for binding output, e.g. technical guideline; focus on common understanding & exchange (learning process)
Conclusions and the way forward

• Forum recommendable as instrument for participation and improving acceptance for measures on fish protection and downstream migration on national level

• Forum participants highlighted:
  – Improvements to the discussion culture
  – Impact expected on advancing the implementation of measures
  – Need to continue this dialogue process

• 2nd cycle of Forum just initiated: 2016 - 2018
  – Continuation of Forum events
  – More in-depth discussion of technical issues
  – Set-up of an information platform
Thank you for your attention!

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http://forum-fischschutz.de
www.ecologic.eu; http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/