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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN WATER RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN ROMANIA: ISSUES, EXPECTATIONS AND ACTUAL INVOLVEMENT

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Abstract

Water and its sustainable use is closely connected to developments in other fields, such as industry, agriculture and services, energy, nature conservation and health. The pressures imposed by the higher water demands, quality of discharges and climate change raise new water challenges which can be overcome only by coordinated efforts of multiple stakeholders through cooperation and participatory processes.

This study presents how public participation – within the context of integrated water resources management – currently functions in Romania. Over the past twenty years, this country witnessed major political, social, economical and environmental transformations. These transformations also mark an evolution from a period in which communist structures destroyed any type of participation into a period in which societal organizations are reconstructed and participatory processes are developing. In this context, this contribution elaborates on the expectations of different stakeholders related to public participation in water resources management, as well as on the actual implementation of public participation in practice. Three case studies are presented, each of them analyzing different aspects of participation in water resources management: *stakeholders' expectations, formal participation procedures* and *active stakeholder involvement*. By using the results of the case studies, we present some of the main issues connected to the limited participation in water resources management. We concluded that although there are institutional efforts and a general willingness to improve public participation in the field of water management, actual involvement of relevant stakeholders is still very limited.

Key words: EASW® methodology, integrated water resources management, participatory processes, river basin management, stakeholders

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