Transboundary Water Cooperation: Mission (im)Possible?

Ambassador Aušra Semaškienė
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“The water problems of our world need not be only a cause of tension; they can also be a catalyst for cooperation...If we work together, a secure and sustainable water future can be ours.”

Kofi Annan, February 2002
Getting transboundary water resources management “right” is urgent because...

➢ Half of global available surface water is found in 263 international river basins
➢ Groundwater resources cross under at least 273 international borders

Water energises all sectors of society

Comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach to the management of water sector is needed
Water and Energy Nexus

Water for Energy

Extraction & Refining
Fuel Production (Ethanol, hydrogen)
Wastewater Treatment
Energy Associated with Uses of Water
Hydropower
Thermo electric Cooling
Extraction and Transmission
Drinking Water Treatment

Energy for Water

Interrelationships between Water and Energy

Energy required to deliver 1 m³ of clean water from...

- Lake or river: 0.37 kWh/m³
- Groundwater: 0.48 kWh/m³
- Wastewater treatment: 0.62 - 0.87 kWh/m³
- Wastewater reuse: 1.0 - 2.5 kWh/m³
- Seawater: 2.58 - 8.5 kWh/m³

Source: Amended diagram based on Scientific American, October 2008
Cooperation on Transboundary Waters is a Lengthy Journey

For each international basin the optimal mode of cooperation depends on a mix of factors including:

➢ hydrologic characteristics
➢ the economics of cooperative investments
➢ numbers and relationships of riparians
➢ costs of parties coming together

Cooperation Tools

- International Conventions & Agreements
  UNECE Convention on the protection and use of transboundary watercourses and international lakes
- Transboundary Environmental Impact Assessments
- Shared experience
  Joint learning
  Round tables
  Cooperative assessments
Nemunas River Basin Management

Countries (% of total river basin):  
Lithuania 48  
Belarus 46  
Russia 3  
Poland 2.6  
Latvia 0.1  

Area (km²) 98 200

First-class tributaries:  
Neris  
Shchara  
Šešupė  
Katra  
Merkys etc.

Legal Cooperation Framework

1. Agreements between Lithuania and Poland’s Ministries of Environment  
2. Technical Protocol on Cooperation in the Protection and Use of the Water Resources in the Transboundary Neman River Basin between Lithuania and Belarus’ Ministries of Environment (in progress)  
3. Agreement between Lithuania, Belarus, Russia and the EU (as a goal)  
4. Bilateral agreements with other countries

Agreements between River Basin Countries Provide Legal Framework for the Protection of the River!
Let the Water Run...?

Intensive water use goes on in the Nemunas River basin due to industry, household water consumption, agriculture and hydro-power engineering.

Unsafe development and operation of nuclear, hydro and water treatment projects put at risk too much.
Safety Formula

Transboundary Water Cooperation + Effective Public Participation + Access to Information + Water Treatment
Thank You for Your Attention!