

REFORM Stakeholder Workshop on River Restoration, Brussels

On 26 and 27 February 2013, around 110 participants attended the **Stakeholder Workshop on River Restoration to Support Effective Catchment Management** of the REFORM project (www.reformrivers.eu) in Brussels. Twenty-three European countries, including national administrations and other stakeholder groups, were represented.



Workshop plenary room (photo: Erik Mosselman)

This workshop was the main external event in the first phase of the REFORM project, providing a platform for consultation and exchange between REFORM scientists, European technical experts working on river degradation and restoration, and members of the Working Group A Ecological Status (ECOSTAT) of the Common Implementation Strategy of the WFD.

The first results of REFORM were presented at the workshop, and the invited experts had the opportunity to give feedback. One of the goals was to gather stakeholders' perspectives on how the management tools and approaches created by the project can contribute to the next round of RBMPs.

Thirteen keynote speakers presented wide-ranging points of view on the topics of river degradation and restoration. Presentations were held by the REFORM partners, the leaders of the WG ECOSTAT, the EEA, DG Environment of the European Commission, the WISER project, and the Life+ RESTORE project, among others.



Panel discussion on 2nd day of workshop (photo: Elena von Sperber)

The workshop's format was very interactive, with parallel sessions addressing different types of European rivers (e.g., highland/midland, lowland, and Mediterranean river systems), as well as the impact of hydromorphological pressures in multiple-pressure settings, designing programmes of measures, and heavily modified water bodies.

In each of the parallel sessions, several priority recommendations/requests to the project were formulated by the stakeholders. A selection of key recommendations/requests to the project referred to the following aspects:

- Better understanding of cause-effect relationships between hydromorphological and biological indicators
- Recommendations for ecological indicators of hydromorphological impacts
- Need for process-led river restoration within a catchment scale approach and need to account for cumulative impacts
- Sediment assessment methods & improvement of knowledge on sediment continuity issues
- Use of existing data (DTM, satellite, monitoring) to characterise river networks at catchment/regional scale and prioritisation of field campaigns to collect integrated fluvial geomorphological information
- Disentangling the effects of hydromorphological pressures, including empirical and modelled data
- Use of hydromorphology to define good ecological potential of heavily modified water bodies
- Cost-effective methods for river restoration monitoring, in terms of spatial and temporal scales and key indicators
- Development of guidance on the definition of environmental flows
- Quantification of ecological and hydromorphological benefits to provide more practical tools; Decision support tools to emphasise benefits of river restoration to stakeholders
- General framework accounting for ecosystem services

- Robust ways to confidently demonstrate success of restoration measures

The research within REFORM is primarily based on compiling and analysing existing data, and there is only limited collection of new data and experimental research. Thus, the outcomes of REFORM strongly depend on the project data collected to study the impacts of degradation or benefits of restoration. In the workshop summary report (<http://www.reformrivers.eu/events/stakeholder-workshop/documents>), specific considerations are reported on what REFORM can do explicitly about the issues raised by stakeholders, giving an indication of the relevant deliverables and the expected time of their publication on the REFORM website (<http://www.reformrivers.eu>).

The REFORM stakeholder workshop provided a very good model of early two-way communication between an EU research project and water managers. Participants supported this type of further interaction to remain informed about the REFORM research results and provide their feedback.

The workshop summary report is available on the workshop website (<http://www.reformrivers.eu/events/stakeholder-workshop/documents>). Additional information about the workshop (discussion paper, programme, presentations) is also available online.

For further information:

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