

**5th European Regional Meeting  
on the implementation and effectiveness of the Ramsar Convention**

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Workshop C Introduction

**The role and effectiveness of CEPA at the local, national and  
international level**

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**CEPA's profile in wetland management**

The guiding document for Ramsar's CEPA Programme is of course Resolution VIII.31 and its annexed guidelines adopted at COP8, *The Convention's Programme on communication, education and public awareness (CEPA) 2003-2008*, now incorporated in Handbook 6 *Wetland CEPA* (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition).

Taking into account the Convention's first programme of actions for promoting wetland CEPA - Resolution VII.9 - CEPA as a Ramsar management tool is now 5 years old and the fact that we have a CEPA workshop as part of this meeting, sitting alongside the more "technical" workshops, is in itself a solid sign of its "coming of age". But before we look at how (and perhaps if) CEPA interventions increase the Convention's capacity to manage wetlands, I think it's worth looking first from a broader perspective on the developing role of CEPA in wetland management in Europe. Just consider, for example:

- The **EU-Water Framework Directive**, adopted in October 2000, where public participation is identified as *core requirement* through Article 14 on *Public information and consultation*. To assist implementers in this area there is Guidance document 8 – all 214 pages of it! But in essence Article 14 requires that:
  - public access to background information should be ensured.
  - consultation in the three steps of the planning process should be ensured.
  - active involvement of interested parties in all aspects of the implementation should be encouraged.
- The **Natura Network Initiative**, set up by Eurosite to raise public and stakeholder awareness of the Natura 2000 network as well as promote good practice in the management of Natura 2000 sites (some of which are Ramsar sites). Although not an obligation under the EU Birds and Habitats Directives, this initiative is in response to a clear need within many countries to reduce the amount of opposition and conflict over the designation of Natura 2000 sites from local communities.
- The European **Aarhus Convention**, adopted in Aarhus, Denmark in 1998, that establishes that sustainable development can be achieved only through the involvement of all stakeholders and requires that each Party guarantees the rights of access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.

So the CEPA profile is indeed higher now than ever before on a very broad scale within Europe but, more specifically within the Ramsar Convention, what is CEPA's role and how effective is it in ensuring sustainable use of wetlands?

### **CEPA role and effectiveness within the Convention**

The CEPA guidelines include three General Objectives. These are detailed below with selected key actions suggested to pursue these objectives in order to define more clearly the role effectiveness of CEPA.

- **Gain acceptance of the value and effectiveness of wetland-related CEPA processes at all levels throughout the Convention.**

***E.g. by ensuring that CEPA is integrated into all Convention work programmes and into all further Ramsar guidance, and, related to this, by establishing an STRP CEPA Working Group.***

At the Standing Committee's 29<sup>th</sup> meeting in 2003, CEPA was identified as a high priority, cross-cutting area for the Convention. Although the CEPA Resolution called for the setting up of an STRP CEPA Working Group to ensure that CEPA is effectively considered in all Ramsar guidance, a compromise solution was reached by STRP in April 2003 due to the lack of funding. This saw the development of CEPA Specialist Group within the Wetlands International system that would help implement the CEPA objectives of both institutions. While this may represent a partial solution, the over-riding problem of this lack of "financial" recognition of CEPA's relevance must surely remain as a serious limitation to its further development as a Convention tool.

*This I see as a key issue worthy of further discussion.*

Is CEPA being integrated into all Ramsar guidance? Although it would be fair to say that the relevance of education and public awareness activities in wetland management has been recognised by the Convention even in some of its earliest guidance materials, it is only since the adoption of Resolution VII.9 and VIII.31 that there has been more specific, targeted recognition of CEPA as an important tool for wetland management. There is without doubt more recognition within the Convention of the need to articulate the CEPA input required in our wetland management guidance.

But just how much CEPA do we need built in to our more technical guidance? Of course it is not possible to quantify this but it would be fair to say that much of our work is of a technical nature so we need to be realistic about just how much CEPA is needed in many of our work areas. But then perhaps what we should be asking is not how much do we need, but how important is it? How much does effective CEPA practice contribute to wetland management success?

- ◆ Many of you will know of Heather MacKay's work on water allocation for wetlands, a key Ramsar issue that saw the adoption of Resolution VIII.1 at COP8. She has noted a key issue in water allocation for wetland ecosystems: the need to talk effectively to the water sector about water allocation issues. From her considerable experience in this area of work Heather estimates that talking effectively to the water sector is 75% technical (being able to talk to them in a commonly understood technical language) and 25% CEPA ("knowing **how** to

talk” to). “Knowing how to talk” is certainly a CEPA skill - but it’s a rather vague area and it is still very much under-rated as a management skill in Ramsar’s technical environment. I see it as an important capacity-building area at all levels in the Convention.

- ◆ Transboundary river basin management is an important issue in the work of the Convention and the subject of one of the workshops at this meeting. Three NGOs were awarded a Ramsar Award in 2003 for their work in establishing the transboundary trilateral Ramsar platform for the Morava-Dyje Floodplain covering Austria, the Czech Republic, and the Slovak Republic. They established a body of 15 experts from the ministries, water management institutions, national Ramsar committees, and NGOs who meet regularly to ensure collaborative management. Although it is hard to quantify the role of CEPA practices in their successful project, I would ask you to quite simply look at the citation and interview text associated with the award – it would be hard not to see the significant CEPA role here. How far would they have succeeded without good CEPA skills is the relevant question to be asking.

➤ **Provide support and tools for the effective national and local implementation of wetland-related CEPA activities.**

***E.g. by nominating CEPA Focal Points to provide national leadership to the CEPA programme and, through the Focal Points, reviewing wetland CEPA needs and priorities and developing a National CEPA Action Plan;***

A key requirement of the CEPA Programme is the nomination of CEPA Focal Points. Unusually in the world of environmental conventions our Resolution calls for an NGO as well as Government CEPA Focal Point. At a recent CEPA experts workshop I attended, this NGO designation was seen as a powerful asset to our programme by individuals helping to implement other MEAs.

There is clear evidence from some of the reports received by the Secretariat from CPs that having both Focal Points working together adds strength to their collective activities – whether it is organising a WWD activity or, on a much larger scale, developing a National CEPA Action Plan. Close cooperation with NGOs brings many benefits in CEPA work through their expertise (and credibility) in working with the public in raising awareness of wetland functions and values but also their skills in participatory techniques, an area that is more and more in demand in the environmental world. As studies have shown, there is ample evidence of their high “credibility” rating with the public, an invaluable asset to our Administrative Authorities in site designation and management.

In the workshop presentations we will be hearing from Susana Calvo and Fernando Ramos, the Government and NGO CEPA Focal Points from Spain, on their on-going efforts to prepare a national CEPA plan for Spain through a participatory process. With only 3 national action plans prepared to date (although two of them, Hungary and Germany, are within Europe), I’m sure that Susana and Fernando will have some words of wisdom and encouragement to share on the challenges and rewards of developing a national action plan. They perhaps will help us see why there are so few National Actions Plans but I hope they will also be showing why it is a worthwhile exercise.

I see this as *key issue* – *what are the main challenges in developing an Action Plan – and is it worth the effort? Is there value in considering sub-national action plans (state or river basin level, for example) as an alternative?*

- **Mainstream the wise use of wetlands within society and enable people to act.**

*E.g. By fostering sustained national campaigns, programmes and projects to raise community awareness of the vital ecosystem services of wetlands as well as their social, economic and cultural values.*

Examples of these abound within the Convention, from short-term activities, such as the more than 250 World Wetlands Day events in more than 80 countries that took place worldwide last year, to long-term projects such as the very successful Austrian Wasserleben project, now its fourth year of operation.

Pierre-Emmanuel Vos of the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development, will be telling us how six thematic centres in France have been set up with detailed programmes of work that are helping in diverse ways to implement the national wetland action plan – this includes a programme of awareness activities, providing that vital link between wetlands and local populations.

Pierre will be raising the *key issue of evaluating CEPA interventions. How do we know that our CEPA interventions are effective?*

### **By supporting and developing mechanisms to ensure that CEPA processes are incorporated into participatory multi-stakeholder wetland management**

Participatory management, a social rather than a scientific/ecological instrument, is an increasingly important wetland management tool, indeed almost mainstream in environmental management today, and it is important to recognise that CEPA tools underpin the effective delivery of participatory management. It is perhaps unfortunate that the CEPA and Participatory guidelines are so separate since they are really so closely linked.

The new management guidelines from COP8, now part of our wetland management package in Handbook 8 *Wetland Management*, recognises the important role of participatory management and CEPA in the wetland management process. In the on-going work of STRP in the development of a field guide for managers, the CEPA Specialist Group has contributed a chapter on *Building partnerships through participation, communication and education* as one of eight chapters in the filed guide, an indication perhaps of its significance.

Indeed the CEPA guidelines recognize site managers as key targets of the programme, having “special need to receive advice on the best practices in managing wetland ecosystems, and on gaining public support and participation for their work, especially where they are responsible for managing a Ramsar site. Site managers also have valuable first-hand experience with wetland management, and finding ways to allow these experiences to be shared between them and with others is a priority.”

Christophe Lefebvre, of the Conservatoire de l'espace littoral et des rivages lacustres, and of Eurosite, will be telling us about the effectiveness of several workshops sponsored through the Danone/Evian Fund for Water in bringing together site managers from the Ramsar and the Natura 2000 networks, establishing effective networks between them and encouraging the sharing of their diverse experiences in site management.