

AUDITING BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY

The Management and Protection of Water Resources (Albania)

Theme: Auditing Biological Diversity

Author: Albania

Background on water resources in Albania

Our country is so rich in water resources that they should be exploited wisely and the government should place more restrictions on their use. The audit available resources for SAIs are always limited. Therefore our SAI is not able to do all performance audits. This is the most important step in performance audit, because here we decide: what to do and how to allocate our resources.

The principle law "For Water Resources" on administration of water resources is adopted in 1996. Being aware that the Water Authorities were established after 2000 and the sub-legal acts were laid down later, SAI sector of environmental protection has carried out regularity audit in the National Water Council in 2003.

The Authorities of the Republic of Albania, responsible for the water, function on basis of law "For Water Resources". The National Council of Water and its executive bodies carry out the management of the water resources: Technical Secretariat at national level, Local Authorities of Basins, Council of Water Basins and Agencies designated by the National Council of Water. The management of water resources in our country comprises six water basins.

Related activities of the SAI of Albania

We have made collection of complete and reliable information, organizing information gathered and detailed analysis of the gathered information (risk assessment), and the audit planning process consisted in two phases: strategic planning and short-term planning. The steps in planning the design phase are: identify information required, sources of information, methods for gathering information, set timetable and consulting the audited subject. For using evidence gathering technique we have made: planning, execution, recording, confirmation and analyzing.

Management of border waters

A Governmental Commission dealing with water issues related to neighbor countries, which is set up in 1999 and run by the Ministry of Territory Adjustment and Tourism, carries out the management of border waters.

Based on the "Treaty between the Republic of Albania and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for the management of border waters", the Albania-Yugoslavia Commission has dealt with issues concerning the water economy, measures and water works, which join or intersect with the state borders, utilization of water in the field of agriculture, energy, fishery, protection from the floods, etc. The dissolution of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia raised the need to make

an agreement with the Republic of Montenegro and Macedonia. In order to plan and manage the available resources for the economy of our country, a convention between Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia should be drawn up and approved on the use of the river waters of White and Black Drin, the coherent utilization, as well as, preservation of common lakes of Oher and Prespe, or other issues relating to water-power station Skavica.

In 1985 it was agreed to set up a joint Albania-Greek Commission of the border river waters, as well as, to sign a draft regulation of this Commission. The joint group of the areas bordering on the common waters consists of technical experts, who have submitted to both governments a draft agreement on the water economy regarding the issues of border waters, the energy utilization of Vjosa river and the lake of Small and Large Prespe, as well as, the research of Korfuz Channel, which is a zone of special natural values for the development of tourism, fishery, marine transport. "A Convention between the governments of the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Greece on the establishment of a joint Albanian-Greek Commission of the border waters" is signed in April 2003. This convention was approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers.

Recommendations from the SAI of Albania related to water

After the final report is drawn up in order to implement the National Program of monitoring the environment, the State Supreme Audit has recommended that the executive bodies of the National Water Council in collaboration with other Ministries and in particular with the Ministry of Environment should accomplish these tasks:

- To supplement and adopt the Water Strategy as the threshold of water reserves management;
- To draw up and adopt all tariffs on water usage in order to manage and set high standards of discipline for using the water reserves appropriately;
- To make a complete inventory of all water reserves and to update their records regularly, this should be done by any Water Authority.
- To set the rules for the direct exploitation of used water;
- To define the standards and the requirements for different kinds of sewage (discharge) works, together with the Ministry of Health and Environment Protection;
- To declare areas of special protection such as basins, rivers and flows of water, which are defined as zones of special natural values and character, as well as, of ecological interest. The management structure and their preservation should be defined by special sub-legal acts;
- To provide information on quarterly basis and submit an annual report to the Ministry of Environment;
- To create a computerized database and provide information about the monitoring of environment, which should be open to the public;

- To draw up the respective regulations and guidelines for monitoring process.

It is worth emphasizing that all our recommendations are accepted by the audited subject which has accomplished and implemented only the first three recommendations during the year 2004.

Background on the use of water resources in Albania

Being supported by the World Bank in the role of co-coordinator of European Commission and UNDP in the role of co-financer, the Council of Ministers has decided and approved: The National Strategy of Water and the Plan of Water Reserve, which deal with all types of water utilization, requirements resources in use, the extent to which the need for water is fulfilled, the quality of the water in use, the potable water, sewages, industrial waters, the drainage systems for discharge, the irrigation systems, hydro-energy, underwater life, fishery, tourism, sailing, etc.

Potable water

In order to provide potable water, it is necessary to follow up a national policy of rehabilitation of water-supply works, so that we can reduce the loss of water, as well as, to ensure a system of tariffs based on the cost of expenditures, improving the commercial and financial performance of water-supply and sewage enterprises. More attention should be paid to issue of providing potable water in order to develop tourism. The National Strategy of Water envisaged the increase of quantitative and qualitative demands for water, as well as, the strengthening of measures for the treatment of dirty waters.

Irrigation

Being supported by the World Bank, the irrigation system is making quick improvements. The rehabilitation of the existing irrigation and draining networks, the organization of farmers into water consumer's unions and the establishment of board for drainage are making possible to monitor the quantity of surface waters, to preserve the soil values and to increase the national agricultural production. The floods cause serious troubles in Albania. They can be avoided by taking measures to reduce the plots of: building of reservoirs for hydro-energy, irrigation, the maintenance of sewer pipes, the function of drainage hydro-pumps and exploitation of gravel from the river beds.

Hydro-energy

Albania is one of the few countries in Europe that has a great capacity of hydro-energy, but most of water reserves are not exploited. Recent researches have been carried out on the construction of new water power station in Banje, Bushat, Skavice and Kalivac. The continued increase of renewable energy sources will be based on the strategy of lower costs of thermal-power plants and other ways of producing energy.

Challenges on national planning for water

Based on the National Strategy of Water, further legal improvements are made by the existing institutional structures such as: Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Food,

Ministry of Health, Regulatory Entity of Water-Supply, Sewage and Treatment of Dirty Water Sector, National Council of Water.

The development of the National Water Strategy and balanced exploitation of water reserves are achieved through a National Plan for the Water Reserves. Besides that, sectional plans for supplying potable water, for the irrigation system and administration of basins are drawn up. In order to achieve the objectives, it is required to increase the monitoring capacities, to update the data on the quality of underground and surface waters, to measure the average of rain falls and flow of the rivers, to gauge the level of lakes, rivers, sea, as well as, the level of underground waters applying contemporary technology.

The Albanian Government has obtained technical assistance from the International Organizations to implement the National Strategy of Water. The financial support of Technical Secretariat of the National Water Council is provided by the European Commission, which aims at increasing the management capacity of this Institution, as the coordinating central entity of managing the water resources. This project has defined the structures for managing the waters, the short and long terms activities and has presented the terms of references, as well as, the preliminary costs for carrying out researches on the exploitation of water reserves.

The tariffs on the use of water are approved by the Decision of the Council of Ministers based on the technical assistance of PHARE program, as well as, the observation made by the specialized institutions. The approval of this decision is part of the compilation of sub-legal acts in compliance with the law: "For Water Reserves", thus it makes an economic estimation of all this national resource. All private or public subjects are licensed to make use of one of the regimes of water exploitation and pay all administrative cost. So far, these costs are not paid by irrigation, sewage and water supply system, as well as the sector of energy. The use of water becomes Free, by means of License, Authorization and Concession. The Water Agencies have started the procedures to grant concessionary binding contracts to the subjects that have applied for water exploitation.

The complete inventory of water reserves and its updated has made by all Water Agencies, as a requisite for the actual and effective implementation of Water Strategy. Based on the expansion and extension of water works and resources, this task is fulfilled in collaboration with the local governments, as well as, with the structures of Technical Secretariat, which should work for registering the national water resources.

As regards the researches on underground waters and its exploitation, the National Water Council has approved the respective regulation, as well as the application forms for the License, Authorization and Concession for the exploitation of water reserves. The researches on special basins revealed that water reserves are decreasing, the underground balance is disturbed and divergent issues are raised such as, pollution, the appearance of salt water, the subsidence of land etc.

As regards the other aforementioned recommendations, beside the efforts made, they are not implemented by all relevant Water Authorities and Ministries. Hence it is our permanent duty to follow up and monitor the implementation of SAI recommendations. In this respect we expect to achieve high results and feel the full sought-after impact of them.