

EU Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC

Costs: £632m per year ([Open Europe](#))

Talking Points

Affecting hydro-power sector

The EU already has tough targets for EU member states to reach 20% renewable energy by 2020. Yet the European Small Hydropower Association claims the directive is hampering growth in this crucial, renewable energy sector. The conservationist demands of the directive, however, deter governments from using rivers and other water bodies for electricity. ([European Small Hydropower Association](#))

Harmonises the treatment of water

This not so much affects the UK, but the directive focuses on 'river basins' that cover national boundaries in order to harmonise practices for maintaining good quality water bodies. This has consequences for national sovereignty and member state policies.

An EU 'water tax'

By 2010 the directive aimed to implement a 'water pricing policy' across the EU in order to (a) ensure efficient use of water and (b) to pay for river basin management plans that aim to improve quality of water in the EU. States with no history of water charges are offered derogations. ([EurActiv](#))

What is it?

A directive to protect the environment of inland surface waters, such as rivers and lakes, estuaries, coastal water (up to 1 kilometre) and ground water. The directive harmonises the way 'water bodies' are managed, cleaned and protected throughout the EU, to meet EU water standards by 2015.

The Directive sets down procedures that member states must comply with in order to meet EU water standards on cleanliness of water bodies in the EU. The cleanliness guidelines set out in the Directive are that water bodies must be at a standard just below 'pristine' and be without "anthropogenic influence", i.e. clean from human activity.

In complying with the Directive the government must produce a series of 'River Basin Management Plans' and other documentation to show how it will comply with the directive.

Member States have to identify all the river basins lying within their national territory and to assign them to individual river basin districts. River basins covering the territory of more than one Member State will be assigned to an international river basin district.

Member States are to designate a competent authority for the application of the rules provided for in this Framework-Directive within each river basin district.

By 2004 at the latest, each Member State shall produce:

- an analysis of the characteristics of each river basin district;
- a review of the impact of human activity on water;
- an economic analysis of water use;
- a register of areas requiring special protection;
- a survey of all bodies of water used for abstracting water for human consumption and producing more than 10 m³ per day or serving more than 50 persons.

This analysis must be revised in 2013 and every six years thereafter.

The directive also allows member states to set up water charging policies in order to incentivise 'efficient' water use.

Third Party Opinions

Malcolm Bell from Visit Cornwall said the additional bureaucracy [of fitting and paying for individual septic tanks] will "hit the profitability of businesses". [Source](#).