

# **Proposals for Society Participation in River Basin Management in Lithuania**

**Jurate Morkvenaite-Paulauskiene  
Environmental Club Zvejone**

## **Introduction**

Solutions and prevention for environmental problems are determined not only by perfect laws and optimal economic measures — what also important is a friendly public opinion along with relevant valuable attitude, awareness and active participation in the consideration and implementation of various levels of decision-making. The development of public environmental awareness is getting more and more important for realization of environmental policy and in pursuit of sustainable development in the broad sense, and public information and education becomes a fundamental assumption of change and civil activity.

**Environmental public awareness is a very important process in ensuring that the society and civil authorities are actively involved in the formation of environmental policy and decision-making.**

In order to encourage people's understanding and responsibility for the environment, it is essential to spread information as widely and intensively as possible using attractive, easily accessible and acceptable means. Access to the relevant information is the basis for raising public awareness, providing more responsible attitude towards the environment, greater participation in the river basin district management process. Article 14 of Water Directive is intended for public information and consultation.

**The programme of measures determines the measures for water use and protection in order to achieve objectives in respect of water protection, set in the Article 22 and 23 of the Law on Water of the Republic of Lithuania. The Article 25 and 29 of the Law on Water of the Republic of Lithuania governs society's active participation in forming, reviewing and updating the river basin district management plans and programmes of measures.**

In order enhance the society to be more active, and to implement the objectives of the river basin district programme of measures regarding public participation, it is essential that the Ministry of Environment, the Environmental Protection Agency, local as well as environmental authorities encourage people to be active and conscious members of the environmental process by organising various actions and events, and that information provision is permanent and targeted.

According to the Eurobarometer survey 2008, Lithuanians were among the least informed EU citizens, while according to the study of 2011, the rate changed from 35 percent to 55 percent.

## **REVIEW ON THE SITUATION IN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN RBD MANAGEMENT 2011 - 2015**

Lithuania, like other European Union countries, seeks to make a good ecological and chemical status of all surface and underground water bodies, and to ensure their long-term and sustainable use (the Water Framework Directive 2000/60/EC).

The following four river basin districts (hereinafter - RBD) are distinguished in Lithuania:

- Nemunas
- Lielupė
- Venta
- Dauguva

In order to improve the status of water bodies and/or prevent it from deterioration, Nemunas, Lielupė, Venta and Dauguva RBD management plans and programmes of measures include water protection objectives and respective measures for water bodies.

The overall goal of water protection is to achieve a “good” status of surface or underground water bodies by 2021. The “good” water status means close to natural and unaffected by human activities.

In 2010, river basin management plans and measures were developed and approved in order to achieve the goals:

The Nemunas River Basin District Management Plan and the Programme of Measures for water protection in Nemunas river basin district was approved by Resolution No. 1098 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 21 July 2010.

The Dauguva River Basin District Management Plan and the Programme of Measures 2010-2015 was approved by Resolution No.1616 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 November 2010. The Lielupė River Basin District Management Plan and the Programme of Measures 2010-2015 was approved by Resolution No. 1618 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 November 2010. The Venta River Basin District Management Plan and the Programme of Measures 2010-2015 was approved by Resolution No. 1617 of the Government of the Republic of Lithuania of 17 November 2010. In 2015, projects of Nemunas, Lielupė, Venta and Dauguva river basin district management plans and programmes of measures were developed.

In order to facilitate the management of water and water bodies, Lithuanian river basins were combined into four RBDs: Nemunas, Venta, Lielupe and Dauguva. RBD management plans and programmes of measures have to be developed and approved by the end of 2015. These documents will be followed while improving the status of the country's water bodies in 2016-2021.

Nemunas, Lielupe, Venta and Dauguva RBD programmes provide for the objective to ensure public and entity awareness on the measures, provided for in the programmes, and their implementation techniques, and to encourage their active participation in water management.

We will review the provided measures for public participation in 2010-2015, their implementation in Nemunas, Lielupe and Venta RBDs, see Table No.1.

In 2007, the Environmental Protection Agency signed cooperation agreements with the water information centers, i.e. six active non-governmental organizations working in the field of water: the Nature Research and Environmental Education Station (Marijampole), the Lithuanian Green Movement, ECAT Lithuania (Kaunas), Eco-Club Žvejoniė (Klaipėda), PI "Water House", and the Baltic Environmental Forum (Vilnius). Operational guidelines 2006 - 2015 for the information centers were also established.

When signing the contract with the non-governmental organizations, the Environmental Protection Agency had promised to provide funds for water information centers activities (i.e., collective assistance, tenders, camps, publishing).

Measures to achieve public participation in Nemunas, Lielupė and Venta RBD management in 2010-2015, Table No.1:

Nemunas RBD

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation of measures under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
<p>8.5. Organizing <b>annual</b> information campaigns for programme executors, general public and individual groups of interests about the Nemunas RBD programme of measures, measures provided for herein, responsible executors, and the role of society and its individual groups in the implementation and monitoring of measures.</p>	<p>In 2013, one information - discussion type seminar - training was organized. It presented the Nemunas river basin district management plan and the programme of measures, measures for improving the status of water bodies, also justification and executors of the measures; the progress of implementation; emerging problems; the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Five articles about water resource management using the RBD management principle were published in the regional press and two articles in the national press in Nemunas river basin districts. Also, there was an article published in the national press about the “Construction of hydroelectric power plants, and their negative impact on water bodies, and how to reduce it”.</p>	<p><b>2011-2015</b></p>	<p>Seminars were to be organized in 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015; four seminars were not organized.</p> <p><b>Proposal:</b> Organizing <b>annual information seminars</b>, reviewing the progress of implementation and the emerging problems, introducing the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Meeting the society and listening to its opinion.</p>

<p>8.6. Organizing annual information campaigns in the regions about the measures (including incentive ones) for individual areas, problems to be solved, responsible executors, and the public role in controlling the implementation of these measures.</p>	<p>In 2012-2013, information-discussion type seminars - trainings were organized on the following topics: "Optimal use of organic and mineral fertilizers in agriculture in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Optimal management of manure and slurry in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Optimal use of land plowing practices in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Safe use of plant protection products in agriculture in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Techniques for the restoration of lakes and ponds"; and training on the improvement of water bodies. Each river basin district had 12 information - discussion type seminars - trainings; 15 articles on these topics were published.</p>	<p>2011-2015</p>	<p>Activities were carried out for 2 years (2012-2013)</p> <p><b>Proposal</b></p> <p>It would be useful to repeat the tender in 2013, and to organize trainings in 2014-2015.</p> <p>In our view, the tender contains excessive requirements for specialists. Services could have been cheaper, if the tender had been split into trainings and public relations services.</p>
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<p>8.7. Organizing public involvement into the process of identifying water protection problems (registration of illegal sources of pollution, etc.) using modern interactive on-line information technology (maps.lt or similar systems)</p>	<p>In 2013, an interactive map for registering water problems was developed, where residents could report water protection problems independently.  <a href="http://vandensauga.gamta.lt/">http://vandensauga.gamta.lt/</a></p> <p>A website was developed for information about Lielupe, Venta and Dauguva RBDs. www.upiubaseinai.lt contains constantly updated information. Various society groups: institutes, universities, schools, non-governmental organizations, owners of certified organic products, water suppliers were e-mailed newsletters.</p> <p>In 2013, there were two competitions organized: a drawing competition, which was attended by approx. 700 pupils, and water research competition. The drawing competition was taken part by primary school pupils, and the Water Research Competition was taken part by pupils in grades 5-8.</p>	<p>2011-2015</p>	<p>Currently, neither map nor the created website is in service. The environmental organizations were not informed about the portals individually; these webpages were not made public; the funds were used inefficiently. Organizing tenders once is not effective.</p> <p><b>Proposals</b>  <b><i>On the interactive map for registering water protection problems.</i></b>  The suggestion for future is to support initiatives instead of wasting funds. For example, well-known maps “Report the Harmed Nature”, which were created by the Baltic Environmental Forum in cooperation with Maps.lt</p> <p><b><i>Contests for students</i></b>  Contests should be organized annually. It would be useful to restore streams research network in schools, where teachers and children would be able to do research on river water, and prepare reports.</p>
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<p>8.8. Organizing training courses and seminars on hazardous substances, their sources, access to water, effect, how to detect them in raw materials, control, mitigation measures, including training on how to properly assess safety data sheets.</p>	<p>In 2013, information-discussion type seminars - trainings were organized. The participants were acquainted with water quality problems resulting from the discharge of hazardous substances into water bodies in Lithuania and in the regions concerned; with problematic hazardous substances in Lithuania and/or the region concerned, and their existent or potential sources, and identification of these sources; the impact of these substances on ecosystems, their identification in raw materials; control of hazardous substances; mandatory content of the safety data sheets, and their control; inventory of these substances on the level of an entity and river basin; inclusion of these substances into the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control permits; the use of more environmentally friendly household chemicals, practical benefits of these solutions; hazardous substance mitigation measures; effects, and other important aspects of the subject. Three information-discussion type seminars - trainings were organized; one printed article on the release of hazardous substances into water bodies.</p>	<p>2012-2015</p>	<p>The plan of measures does not provide for the measure to be organized annually, however three seminars within four years is not enough.</p> <p><b>Proposal</b>  To organize three seminars on the relevant topics every year.  To organize lectures, quizzes in schools and kindergartens.</p>
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## Lielupe RBD

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation of measures under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
<p>Organizing <b>annual</b> information campaigns for programme executors, general public and individual groups of interests about Lielupė RBD programme of measures, measures provided for herein, responsible executors, and the role of society and its individual groups in the implementation and monitoring of measures.</p>	<p>In 2013, two information - discussion type seminars - trainings were organized. They presented the Lielupė river basin districts management plan and the programme of measures, measures for improving the status of water bodies, also justification and executors of the measures; the progress of implementation; emerging problems; the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Two articles about water resource management using the RBD management principle were published in Lielupė river basin districts and in the regional press.</p>	<p><b>2011-2015</b></p>	<p>Seminars were to be organized in 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015; four seminars were not organized.</p> <p><b>Proposal: Organizing annual information seminars,</b> reviewing the progress of implementation and the emerging problems, introducing the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Meeting the public and listening to its opinion on the progress of implementation.</p>

**Venta RBD**

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation of measures under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
<p>- To ensure public and entity awareness on the measures provided for in the Programme and their implementation techniques, and to encourage their active participation in water management.</p>	<p>In 2013, one information - discussion type seminar - training was organized. It presented the Venta river basin district management plan and the programme of measures, measures for improving the status of water bodies, also justification and executors of the measures; the progress of implementation; emerging problems; the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. One article about water resource management using the RBD management principle was published in Venta river basin district, and one article about "Construction of hydroelectric power plants, and their negative impact on water bodies, and how to reduce it".</p>	<p><b>2011-2013</b></p>	<p>Seminars were to be organized in 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2015; four seminars were not organized.</p> <p><b>Proposal: Organizing annual information seminars,</b> reviewing the progress of implementation and the emerging problems, introducing the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Meeting the public and listening to its opinion on the progress of implementation.</p>

**Dauguva RBD**

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation of measures under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
<p>- To ensure public and entity awareness on the measures provided for in the Programme and their implementation techniques, and to encourage their active participation in water management.</p>	<p>Not carried out</p>	<p><b>2011-2013</b></p>	<p><b>Proposal: Organizing annual information seminars,</b> reviewing the progress of implementation and the emerging problems, introducing the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Meeting the public and listening to its opinion.</p>

Conclusions on public participation in RBDs in the period from 2010 to 2015:

- During the implementation of the activities, no public organizations, working in the area related with water, were included; no cooperation agreements were signed; and no water information centers were established; no activities, except the Baltic Environmental Forum, in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency were carried out;
- The interactive map <http://vandensauga.gamta.lt/>, intended for the registration of water problems, is out of service; the funds were used inefficiently;
- The website [www.upiubaseinai.lt](http://www.upiubaseinai.lt), developed for the information about Lielupe, Venta and Dauguva RBDs, is out of service; the funds were used inefficiently;
- Information campaigns for programme executors, general public and individual groups of interests were not carried out annually, as foreseen in the plan of measures;
- Public involvement and information in 2011 - 2015 is inconsistent, chaotic, insufficient in quantity and quality; the funds were used inefficiently.

**Proposals for public participation in river basin management in 2016-2021, see Table No. 2.**

## Proposals for public participation in river basin management in 2016-2021

### Nemunas RBD

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
8.5. Organizing <b>annual</b> information campaigns for programme executors, general public and individual groups of interests about the Nemunas RBD programme of measures, measures provided for herein, responsible executors, and about the role of society and its individual groups in the implementation and monitoring of the measures.	<b>2016-2021</b>	Preparing presentations for programme executors and for the public; distributing e-mails; organizing discussions - meetings.
8.6. Organizing annual information campaigns in the regions about the measures (including incentive ones) for individual areas, problems to be solved, responsible executors, and the public role in controlling the implementation of these measures.	2011-2015	Organizing the River Day, i.e. a family and community event, which would include a variety of activities for families (a lecture about Nemunas RBD implementation, concert, research on streams, animal exhibition, land art, organizing collective assistance by the river, drawing on the water, lectures on “Clean house without dangerous chemicals”, information centers, activities, guide tours, theater performances, films, etc.). One of the possibilities is choosing to celebrate the world River Day on the last Saturday of September. In case the funds are limited, the event can be organized during the town festival or fair in the presence of a lot of people; these activities are complementary to the main activities.

<p>8.7. Organizing public involvement into the process of identifying water protection problems (registration of illegal sources of pollution, etc.) using modern interactive on-line information technology (maps.It or similar systems)</p>	<p>2011-2015</p>	<p><b>Regarding the interactive map for registering water problems.</b>  To take the map from the Maps.It system; to create a comfortable and fast app on a mobile phone.  <b>Website.</b>  upes.gamta.lt or other address. It is important that the website is still in service even after the termination of the contract. The website should be intended for various society groups: institutes, universities, schools, non-governmental organizations, owners of certified organic products, water suppliers.  Places for lectures prepared in 2010-2015 on the following topics: "Optimal use of organic and mineral fertilizers in agriculture in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Optimal management of manure and slurry in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Optimal use of land plowing practices in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Safe use of plant protection products in agriculture in order to reduce pollution of water bodies"; "Techniques for the restoration of lakes and ponds".</p> <p>Methods for research on streams; a film about RBD management, etc. other information.</p> <p><b>Student competitions</b>  Stream research competitions should be organized annually; discovery of the nature on the school level, such as exploring running water, would grow into a wider interest in the surrounding environment; apart from exploring and describing, individual student groups also exchange ideas and results, or share their experience with other similar groups.  Schools lack education in researcher's competence in discovering the unknown (to pupils) facts and phenomena, and in revealing their interrelationship.</p>
<p>8.8. Organizing training courses and seminars on hazardous substances, their sources, access to water, effect, how to detect them in raw materials, control, mitigation measures, including training on how to properly assess safety data sheets.</p>	<p>2012-2015</p>	<p>Organizing three seminars each year on the relevant topics, and transfer the lecture to the River Day.  Organizing lectures on "Chemicals in our home", etc., and other quizzes.</p>

**Lielupe, Venta, Dauguva RBDs**

Measures to achieve the objective, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Environment	Implementation period	Proposals for implementation
<p>Organizing <b>annual</b> information campaigns for programme executors, general public and individual groups of interests about the RBD programme of measures, measures provided for herein, responsible executors, and the role of society and its individual groups in the implementation and monitoring of the measures.</p>	<p><b>2011-2015</b></p>	<p><b>Organizing annual information seminars</b>, reviewing the progress of implementation and the emerging problems, introducing the public role in achieving a good status of water bodies. Meeting the public and listening to its opinion on the progress of implementation.</p> <p>Promoting cooperation between these districts with Latvian municipalities. A number of projects and joint events take place in Lielupē RBD, where Latvian municipalities and Pakruojis District Municipality administration are very active.</p>

**Possibilities for public participation in river basin management in 2016-2021:**

- We submitted proposals on how to improve public participation in river basin management in 2016-2021;
- We suggest to improve cooperation by implementing public information activities in conjunction with public organizations, communities, universities, also to work not only with specialists, but also actively include the society into the process of improving the status of water bodies;
- Stream research competitions should be organized annually; discovery of the nature on the school level, such as exploring running water, would grow into a wider interest in the surrounding environment;
- Public information and participation activities should be consistently carried out every year; the activities should be continuous and long-term in order to avoid multiple payments for the same activities.