

WMO RA VI Hydrology Forum

Terms of Reference

Background

The WMO Regional Association VI (Europe), at its fifteenth session in September 2009, established a Working Group on Climate and Hydrology (RA VI WG-CH) with the objectives, inter alia, to promote activities of National Hydrological Services (NHSs) ¹in Europe and to act as a platform for exchange of scientific and technical expertise and to support the implementation of WMO Hydrology and Water Resources Programme in the region.

The RA VI region has several international river basins and for many of them collaboration mechanisms (often in form of basin commissions) have been established between riparian countries and their hydrological players. However, most of the activities of NHSs are at the national level and, moreover, in many countries the water sector is highly fragmented - both operationally and in the spatial scale within several national and sub-national agencies. As a result, there are no region-wide, operational hydrological systems, and although NHSs use similar practices in their core activities, they do not share common standards for the design and operation of services.

Currently NHSs are facing new pressures for several reasons. On the one hand, new requirements have been created by various developments such as the adoption of European Union Directives relevant to the water sector, the need to account for climate change impacts and adoption of adaptation measures in water management practices, and overall growing demands for water information by stakeholder communities and multidisciplinary scientific work. On the other hand, public budgets are constantly reduced throughout the region, and basic hydrological systems are easy targets for cuts.

Through formal and informal meetings with representatives of NHSs and other stakeholders in the water domain, the RA VI WG-CH and the WMO Secretariat have noted the need to discuss strategic and operational aspects of hydrological activities between NHSs and their main partners. Due to the pressures that the community is facing, this collaboration and joined planning is growing more and more important.

¹ Including joint National Hydrometeorological Services

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To provide a platform where all the issues and challenges related to the operation of hydrological networks and services can be discussed among interested professionals and other stakeholders, the WG-CH has proposed to set up a Hydrology Forum for members of WMO RA VI, with the following Terms of Reference:

1. To develop a common strategy in RA VI for the sustainability, design and harmonization of regional hydrological monitoring and data networks and other hydrological services;
2. To act as a platform for capacity building, exchanging good practices and technical solutions and promote approaches that will improve the cost-efficiency of hydrological services;
3. To strengthen the networking amongst RA VI NHSs in the field of hydrology including through joint projects and activities;
4. To promote and facilitate the cross-border exchange of hydrological information and practices in the spirit of WMO Res. 25 (Cg-13);
5. To facilitate development of coordinated positions on improving hydrological services in support of social, economic and environmental needs, such as security, health, water management and climate adaptation in complementarity / agreement / support with relevant WMO programmes;
6. To provide advice to the WG-CH in identifying possible contributions of RA VI NHSs to WMO programs, in particular the Hydrology and Water Resources Programme, including synergies with CHy activities;
7. To develop proposals on hydrological contributions to global, regional and national water and climate activities (WMO Integrated Global Observation System (WIGOS), WMO Information System (WIS), Global Framework for Climate Services (GFCS), Regional Climate Centres (RCCs), Regional Climate Outlook Forums (RCOFs), Climate Watches) and provide inputs in the development of the GFCS User Interface concept;
8. To discuss issues and challenges related to the implementation of EU directives and their implications for non EU members;

The RA VI Hydrology Forum is an informal entity, but it will be strongly linked with the work of RA VI WG-CH, as well as the regional operational hydrology on a larger scale. The Hydrology Forum will operate through a series of meetings/events, an e-forum and related consultation between WMO Secretariat, CHy, RA VI WG-CH and NHSs.

Primarily the RA VI Hydrology Forum is targeted to the NHSs of the region. As the forum aims at improved dialogue within the water and related sectors on national and regional scales, other experts and groups of interest will also be invited, depending on the themes of future events.

Provisionally it is proposed to organize an RA VI Hydrology Forum event at least every two years.

Work Plan 2012 – 2014

The theme of the RA VI Hydrology Forum 2012 meeting (Koblenz, Germany, 8-10 May 2012) was “Hydrological monitoring and monitoring networks”. The aspects of monitoring objectives, network design and optimization, and strategies for developing hydrological monitoring were especially highlighted.

The meeting assessed both strengths and gaps/needs related to the activities of NHSs. Based on this discussion, a group of priority activities that can be promoted by the Hydrology Forum were identified. Some of these support the design and operation of hydrological monitoring networks, and these activities will be linked with the RA VI Task Team Hydrometry. On the other hand, some of the activities have a clearly wider scope.

The identified activities and their coordinators are given below.

Group I – support to the WG-CH Hydrometry Task Team:

- operational maintenance procedures of networks, synthesis of security regulations (Vasko Stojov, Macedonia)
- inventory of monitoring needs; network optimization and strategic planning (Dominique Bérod, Switzerland)
- case studies on network design practices (Elise Trondsen, Norway)
- harmonization of methodologies, quality control and access to data (Harry Dixon, UK)

Group II – support to other topics related to HWRP and WG-CH activities:

- positioning of the RA VI hydrological community in respect to decision makers and other expert and science communities (Markku Puupponen, Finland, acting in his capacity as WG-CH co-chair)
- providing an overview on how actual challenges are addressed (Ann Calver, UK)
- identifying national focal points (Tommaso Abrate, WMO Secretariat)
- data needs analysis - synthesis of national and regional requirements (medium term) (Mary-Jeanne Adler, Romania)
- improving formalized data sharing procedures with regard to data centres; simplify data exchange for day to day operational requirements of NHSs (Ulrich Looser, Germany) in the spirit of WMO Res. 25 (Cg-13) and in close cooperation with WMO Secretariat
- joint resource mobilization for enhancing cooperation in the region (Johannes Cullmann, Germany)

The Forum agreed that the coordinators are free to decide on the organization of their activity. The participants of the Forum and RA VI NHSs are expected to give full support to the coordinators. The coordinators will prepare a brief activity plan by the end of August 2012 and the plans will be sent to the participants and NHSs for comments. The activities will be carried out by the next RA VI Hydrology Forum that will be tentatively organised in 2014.