

## *Editorial*



The European Water Framework Directive (WFD) can still be seen as the world's most developed water management regime, combining ambitious quality objectives with a full-fledged integrated river-basin approach. When the Directive was adopted in 2000 it was well acknowledged that its implementation necessitates huge efforts and fundamental transformation in administrative arrangements. Accordingly, the WFD was designed as a “generation-task” with a long-term 27-year implementation schedule. Today, with nearly two thirds of this schedule passed and the ultimate deadline coming closer, we are increasingly experiencing the challenges of this far-reaching program. For many freshwaters and ground waters achievement of the quality objectives is still far out of sight, and interstate cooperation on transboundary pollution is scarcely happening. Over all, it seems that Member States have done far too little to effectively adapt their management structures and to improve chemical and ecological water quality. In contrast, the recent judgments delivered by the CJEU in *Weser* and *Schwarze Sulm* have shown that the WFD objectives constitute binding law and need to be effectively implemented. In the face of these judgments and the approaching (ultimate) third management cycle the WFD has recently gained momentum in both water administrations and environmental law debate with a lot of open questions remaining to be discussed.

This special issue is dedicated to bring forward a few examples and several key aspects concerning the *effectiveness* of the implementation of this Directive, and of the directives falling within its framework. As regards the general framework, Squintani, Plambeck and Van Rijswijk's contribution as well as Hendry's contribution look at the implementation of the Water Framework Directive in the Netherlands and Scotland, respectively. As regards specific issues, De Smedt's contribution focuses on a legal instrument in spatial planning to ban building in flood areas. Van Hees' study instead focuses on the possibilities to grant permissions for large-scale water-related innovative renewable energy projects under the Water Framework Directive. Finally, Howarth discusses possible consequences of Brexit for water management in the United Kingdom.

Besides focusing on water law, this issue brings forward Darpo's consideration as regards the Commission Notice on Access to Justice in Environmental Matters and Brönneke's discussion on what legislative measures could be adopted to counteract premature wear and tear of consumer goods in order to achieve, among others, environmental goals. We wish the reader great pleasure in the reading of these materials.

*Moritz Reese, Lorenzo Squintani and Marleen van Rijswick*