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The SedNet Mission

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The SedNet mission is to be a European network for environmentally, socially and economically viable practices of sediment management on river basin scales. Due to the trans-boundary nature, no single water manager or country has the responsibility of solving sediment management problems at such a scale. SedNet is established to help to structure and facilitate a European approach on this issue.

1 Shift in Scope

The European Water Framework Directive wants to 'establish a framework for the protection of inland surface water, transitional waters and groundwater' and aims at 'achieving good ecological potential and good surface water chemical status at the latest 15 years from the date of entry into force of this Directive', i.e. 22 December 2000 (Directive 2000/60/EC, L327/1, Official Journal of the EC).

The implementation of the Water Framework Directive results in a shift in the scope of water management: from local scale to, often trans-boundary, river basin scale. Sediment is an essential, integral and dynamic part of river ecosystems. At a river basin scale, sediment is poorly covered by traditional water management approaches.

2 Challenges

Europe faces the remediation of historically contaminated sedimentation areas in many river basins and their estuaries. Whereas the water quality in most places is improving, the legacy of the past industrial era is still present. Contaminated sediment is hidden under water and in the fast floodplains of early-industrialized European river basins. An increasingly important challenge in European river basin management is to develop strategies and solutions for this legacy of the past. Another challenge is to further reduce water and thus sediment pollution from point sources and especially from diffuse sources. Efforts need to be made to increase public awareness of sediment as an essential element of the river basin ecosystem. Sediment is a beneficial resource worthy of protection and conservation.

3 Exchange of Experiences

Sediments mainly got local attention of water managers confronted with sediment management. This is especially the case

when associated contamination poses an environmental or human risk. More and more water managers, port authorities and researchers express the need to exchange these local experiences internationally, or at least at a river basin scale. There is also a need to develop sediment management guidelines based on a multidisciplinary, co-ordinated and harmonised approach. Thus, in opposition to the scattered responsibilities for sediment management and to the scattered development of knowledge.

These were the reasons to set up the Demand Driven, European Sediment Research Network (SedNet). SedNet is funded for 3 years as a Thematic Network project by the European Union under the Energy, Environment and Sustainable Development programme and within area 1.4.1 on 'Abatement of water pollution from contaminated land, landfills and sediments' (Contract No. EVK1-CT-2001-20002, starting date: 1 January 2002).

4 Triple-P

Sustainable sediment management at a river basin scale is an extremely challenging goal, which can only be achieved by establishing and maintaining a delicate balance between the interests of the environment (Planet), society (People) and economy (Profit). This is commonly indicated as the 'Triple-P bottom line'. SedNet wants to find, and thereafter communicate, possible ways forward to achieve this goal.

For this, SedNet will annually organise a conference and several technical and socio-economic oriented workshops addressing riverine-related sediment and dredged-material management issues. Those responsible for that management can meet here with the experts who provide them with the demanded management approaches, tools, technologies and expertise.

