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ISONITRATE : Characterization of the pollution sources : towards isotopes

- IOWater - Our projects : news and update -



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OIEau

(The News N° 17 - February 2010)

In the specific context where pollution by nitrates is considered as one of the main reasons for not achieving the objectives of Good Status before 2015 in many European regions, how to help the water managers in the implementation of effective measures at reasonable cost ?

The international workshop, organized by the International Office for Water and the partners of the **LIFE ISONITRATE** project, gave tangible answers to this question on 10 and 11 December 2009 at the UNESCO in Paris.

The ISONITRATE Project, coordinated by BRGM aimed to prove the added value of the isotopic method for the characterization of the sources of pollution by nitrates : four case studies were carried out, each presenting different characteristics to offer a representative panel of the possible uses of the method.

During the workshop, the scientific state-of-the-art of the usual and innovative approaches to the nitrates follow-up was drawn up, a round table on the alternative methods of management of pollution by nitrates was facilitated by Jeroen Casear of the European Commission.

More than a mere information feedback on a nth European project, the workshop was conceived and arranged so that the participants could take part in the discussions, exchange their viewpoints and experiments. Further to the topic of pollution by nitrates and the prospects for alternative management proposed by the isotopes, the conference contributed in the removal of barriers between the water stakeholders and in the development of an interface between science and policy.

Isotopic follow-up of pollution by nitrates : towards water policies adapted to the kinds of pollution

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ISONITRATE, a LIFE European demonstration project (2007-2009) coordinated by BRGM, is addressing the decision makers and managers of the water world to show the added value of isotopic followup in understanding pollution by nitrates in groundwater. ISONITRATE aims at showing how an isotopic approach allows a better characterization of the river basins, distinguishing the various sources of nitrates and analyzing the pressures / impacts of pollution by nitrates.

The ISONITRATE objective is finally to help formulate policies adapted to the various sources of pollution identified.

IOWater intervenes in the dissemination of the project outputs.

During this first year, conclusive results already could be evidenced, thanks to the sampling campaigns carried out over two periods (winter and summer). The isotopic approach was used in four well differentiated sites : complex site with pollution by nitrates of multiple origins, simple site where only one kind of pollution was identified until now, natural site where nitrification would be independent from human activities and a natural nitrate removal site.

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The sampling campaigns are going on. ISONITRATE presented its intermediate outputs during the conference, entitled : a European policy for groundwater, organized at the UNESCO in Paris on 13-15 November 2008.