EU LIFE Programme integrated project
"Implementation of River Basin Management Plans of Latvia towards good surface water status"

Agenda of the workshop

Private Landowners Adjacent to Water Bodies: Rights, Duties, and Water Management

18-19 February 2026 (from lunch to lunch), venue: AC hotel Riga, Dzirnavu street 33, Riga

Background:

The Water Framework Directive (WFD) establishes an EU-wide legal framework aimed at achieving *good ecological and chemical status* of all water bodies. While the Directive sets obligations for Member States, these are subsequently translated into rights and duties for both private and public actors through national legislation. Member States are required to ensure that neither private nor public activities on land or in water bodies lead to deterioration of water status and that all relevant actors contribute to achieving the objectives of the WFD. The specific legal and administrative approaches used to fulfil these obligations vary among Member States, depending on existing legal systems and practices.

Various activities—such as pollution from different sources, water abstraction, physical modification of water bodies, or inappropriate riparian management—can negatively affect water status. At the same time, inactivity or insufficient maintenance, for example allowing natural water flow to be obstructed by fallen trees, accumulated debris, or sedimentation, can also lead to deterioration. Such impacts may occur not only locally but can affect longer stretches of rivers and connected water bodies.

In Latvia, only a limited number of larger water bodies (river stretches and lakes) are publicly owned, while the vast majority—more than 90%—are privately owned. In addition, most land adjacent to water bodies is privately owned, with the exception of forest land, which is largely owned by the state or municipalities. Consequently, the actions and inaction of private actors, including individual landowners, play a crucial role in water management and in achieving the objectives of the WFD.

Currently, approximately two thirds of Latvia's water bodies do not meet the requirement of good ecological status. This situation highlights the need to review the existing regulatory framework and to discuss key challenges related to the definition and implementation of rights and duties of land and water owners. This workshop aims to provide a platform for such discussion and to explore possible approaches to improving water management practices involving private landowners.

Aim of the workshop:

- To share, examine, and compare approaches in Baltic and Nordic countries to the definition and practical implementation of legal responsibilities of private landowners adjacent to water bodies, with a view to ensuring good ecological status of waters in line with the Water Framework Directive.
- To identify gaps and challenges in existing legal frameworks and to formulate recommendations for improving the regulation and guidance of private water management responsibilities.

Leading questions:

- How are the goals and other obligations of the water management determined into rights and duties of private landowners in different Baltic countries?
- What responsibilities do private landowners have regarding active measures (e.g. maintenance, vegetation management, removal of obstructions) versus restrictions on harmful activities?
- To what extent are landowners legally responsible for inaction that leads to deterioration of water status?
- What instruments (legislation, guidance, voluntary, incentives or others) are used to regulate and incentivize individual activities (natural persons) affecting water bodies?

Target group of the workshop: legal advisers, policy makers, river basin managers, and other interested parties.

Day 1

13:00-13:30	**Arrival & registration**	**Tea/ coffee/sandwiches and snacks**
13:30-13:45	**Opening of the workshop** *Kristīna Veidemane, BEF – Latvia, moderator of the workshop* **Welcome** *by Iveta Teibe, Water department, Ministry of Climate and Energy* **Introduction round of the participants**	
13:45-14:20	**Setting the scene: provisions of the Water Framework Directive (WFD)** *Key note by Dr. Žaneta Mikosa, legal expert on EU law and environmental protection*	
14:20-15:00	**Legal approaches to determining responsibilities of private landowners in Lithuania: what works well and what are the shortcomings in the context of the WFD objectives** *Presentation by Tomas Želvys, Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment*	
15:00 -15:30	**Tea/ coffee**	
15:30-16:00	**Legal approach in determining responsibilities for private landowners Latvia: challenges in the context of WFD** *Presentation by Dr. Žaneta Mikosa, legal expert on EU law and environmental protection*	
16:00-17:00	**Working groups on setting legal responsibilities**	
17:00-17:45	**Discussion on the working group results**	
18:00	**Closing of the day**	
18:30-21:00	**Joint dinner** (*costs covered by the organiser, restaurant "Lidojošā varde" (Flying frog), Elizabetes street 31 a, Riga*	

Day 2

9:00-9:15	**Opening of the day/re-cap of the previous day**
9:15-10:00	**Enforcement mechanisms for implementing legal requirements meeting water management objectives** *Presentation Dr Kristina Veidemane, Baltic Environmental Forum - Latvia*
10:00-10:45	**Application of enforcement mechanisms for meeting water management objectives in Estonia** *Presentation by Reeda Iismaa, Estonian Ministry of Climate*
10:45 -11:15	**Tea/ coffee**
11:15-12:00	**Working group session on enforcement mechanisms**
12:00-12:30	Discussion on working group results
12:30-13:00	Conclusions of the workshop
13:30	*Light lunch*

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